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How Companies Can Create Meaningful Change

IN THE WAKE OF widespread anti-racism demonstrations in the U.S. and across the world, many companies have made unprecedented commitments to diversity and inclusion, launching ad campaigns and task forces and speaking out forcefully against racism, especially anti-Black racism.

Now comes the real test. To shift our economy and society meaningfully toward equity, these acts must be followed by long-term actions. Companies must confront racism at a systemic level, addressing everything from the role they play in the economy at large to their own internal structures. All business leaders must be vocal about race, diversity, and inclusion. And white leaders and employees must work on a personal level to better understand the experiences of their Black and brown colleagues and to see their own biases, histories, and everyday actions in a new light.

This work isn't straightforward; there's a reason that corporate diversity programs have historically failed. But there are proven ways to improve hiring programs, interrupt bias at the team level, interrogate supposedly "color-blind" analytics, and support employees of color. For this special

issue, we've selected from our archive the most practical and important articles HBR has published over the years to help leaders implement these changes and fight racism at work more effectively and sustainably.

In this issue we're also proud to feature the work of Black illustrators on the cover and alongside all the feature articles (many of these were also written by people of color). And though we don't typically make changes to previously published articles, we've also capitalized "Black" throughout this issue, adhering to our new house style that recognizes a shared culture, experience, and history.

Years of research have shown that diverse organizations and teams outperform their peers. But, as Laura Morgan Roberts and Anthony J. Mayo argue in "Toward a Racially Just Workplace," the fundamental argument for the fight for diversity, equity, and inclusion must be a moral one. We hope that this collection of articles provides a starting place for companies and business leaders to take on this work together.

– *The Editors*

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FALL 2020

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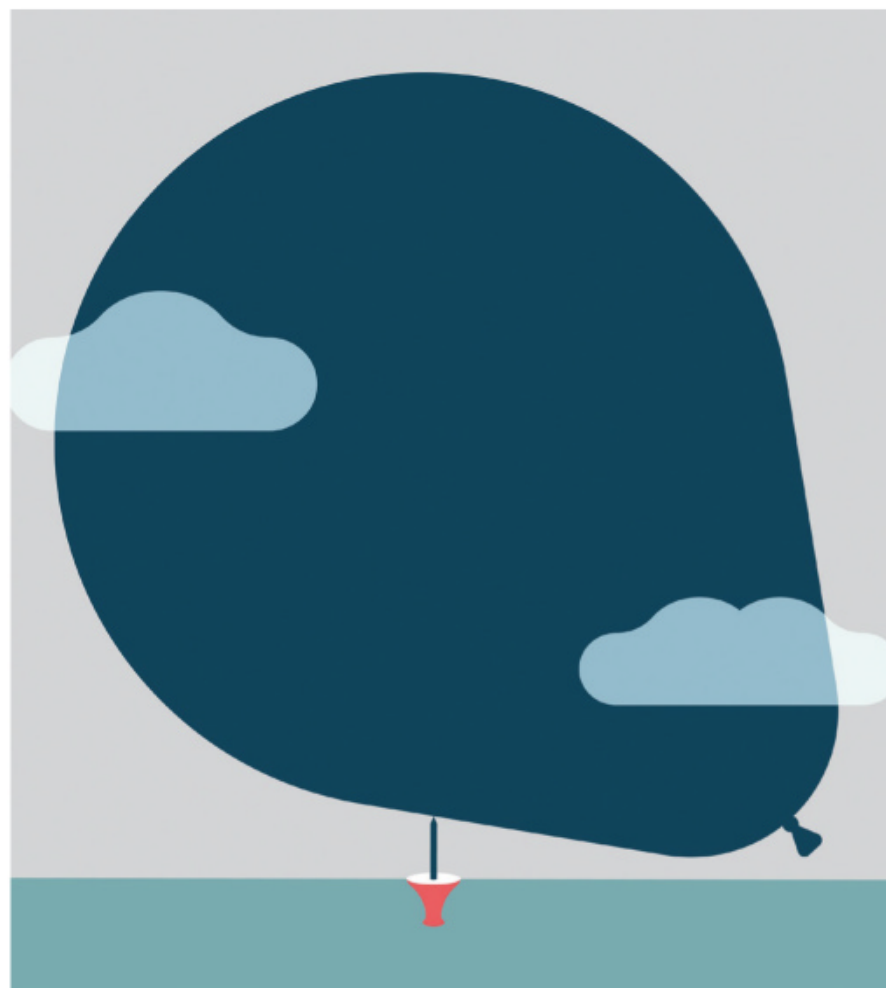
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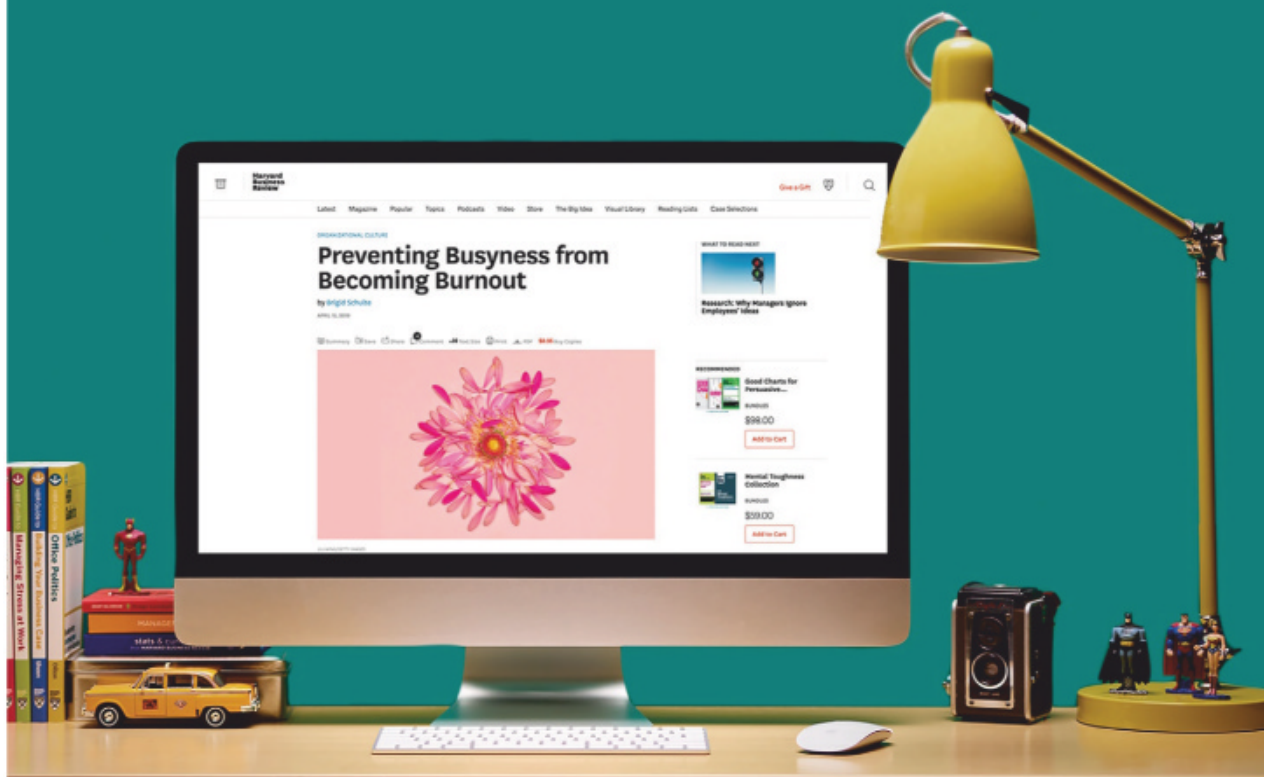
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WHAT SYSTEMIC RACISM LOOKS LIKE

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Toward a Racially Just Workplace

Diversity efforts are failing Black employees. Here's a better approach.

→ by LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS and ANTHONY J. MAYO

“SUCCESS IS TO BE MEASURED not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which [one] has overcome while trying to succeed.”

Booker T. Washington, the educator, author, activist, and presidential adviser, wrote those words more than a century ago as a way of encouraging his African American compatriots—many of them recently emancipated from slavery—to persist in the fight for equal rights and economic opportunities. He was proud of what he and his peers had achieved. He surely believed there was satisfaction in struggling against and surmounting bad odds. And yet we must also assume that he, along with millions

of other freedom fighters, wanted future generations of Black Americans to suffer fewer hardships. He hoped today's Black leaders would find easier paths to success.

Has that dream been realized? Having spent the past 20 years conducting and reviewing research on African Americans' advancement, particularly in the workplace, and having collected our work and others' into a book, we must report that the answer is partly yes but mostly no.

No doubt, there has been progress. Civil rights laws have been passed and affirmed. Companies are committing to and investing heavily in diversity, because more corporate leaders acknowl-

edge that it makes good business sense. And several Black billionaires and CEOs sit on the respective ranking lists.

However, according to both quantitative and qualitative data, working African Americans—from those laboring in factories and on shop floors to those setting C-suite strategy—still face obstacles to advancement that other minorities and white women don't. They are less likely than their white peers to be hired, developed, and promoted. And their lived experience at work is demonstrably worse even than that of other people of color.

These challenges might, as Washington said, make success sweeter for the few who overcome them. But a huge gap remains between what organizations are saying and doing to promote inclusion and the outcomes we're seeing for many Black workers and managers. If leaders want to walk their talk, they must spearhead much more meaningful change. Instead of undervaluing and squandering Black talent, they must recognize the resilience, robust sense of self, and growth mindset that, studies show, African American people—as one of the most historically oppressed groups in the United States—bring to the table. They should work even harder to seek out and support them, from entry-level recruitment to CEO succession.

We have not identified any major company that is doing this well on a broad scale. But research and lessons gleaned from other contexts can point the way forward. In our work with leading management thinkers and practitioners across the country, we have arrived at a four-step strategy to help companies move toward greater and





better representation for Black leaders. It involves shifting from an exclusive focus on the business case for racial diversity to embracing the moral one, promoting real conversations about race, revamping diversity and inclusion programs, and better managing career development at every stage. Given the increasing importance of purpose and social impact to employees, customers, and other stakeholders, we believe there's no better time to make this transformation. We also believe our framework can be adapted for other marginalized groups in the United States and around the world.

Taking these steps won't be easy; executives will need to think deeply about their ethics and corporate culture and exert extra effort for a cause they may not consider central to their business. But the reward will be great: maximizing the human potential of everyone in the workplace.

Underrepresented, Unsupported, Unfulfilled

At most large U.S. and multinational organizations, diversity and inclusion (D&I) has become an imperative. Companies are pushing for minority recruitment, paying for antibias training, and sponsoring nonwhite employees for high-potential leadership-development programs. Research has shown, and a great many executives now understand, that a heterogeneous workforce yields more innovation and better performance than a homogeneous one does.

And yet 55 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and decades into these corporate D&I efforts, African Americans' progress toward top man-

agement roles and greater economic well-being and influence remains slow to nonexistent. Let's look first at the demographics.

What the numbers say. Yes, we can point to the rise of several prominent Black leaders, from media figures Oprah Winfrey, Robert Johnson, and Jay-Z to financiers Ken Chenault and Robert Smith and sports-stars-turned-businesspeople Serena Williams, Michael Jordan, and LeBron James. Most notably, America elected its first African-descended President, Barack Obama, in 2008 and reelected him in 2012. The number of African Americans earning bachelor's and graduate degrees continues to increase. And Black people account for 12% of the U.S. workforce, close to their 13.4% representation in the general population.

However, in the words of leaders from the Toigo Foundation, a career advancement organization for underrepresented groups, such evidence merely gives us "the illusion of inclusion." In fact, research shows that in the United States, the wealth gap between Blacks and others continues to widen; experts predict that Black families' median wealth will decrease to \$0 by 2050, while that of white families will exceed \$100,000. Just 8% of managers and 3.8% of CEOs are Black. In the *Fortune* 500 companies, there are currently only three Black chief executives, down from a high of 12 in 2002. And at the 16 *Fortune* 500 companies that report detailed demographic data on senior executives and board members, white men account for 85% of those roles.

Black leaders have struggled to make inroads in a variety of influential indus-

tries and sectors. At U.S. finance companies, only 2.4% of executive committee members, 1.4% of managing directors, and 1.4% of senior portfolio managers are Black. A mere 1.9% of tech executives and 5.3% of tech professionals are African American. Black representatives and senators account for 9% of the U.S. Congress. The average Black partnership rate at U.S. law firms from 2005 to 2016 was 1.8%. Only 7% of U.S. higher education administrators and 8% of nonprofit leaders are Black. And just 10% of U.S. businesses are owned by Black men and women. As the Toigo Foundation points out, all this has a cascading impact on economic development, housing, jobs, quality of schools and other services, access to education, infrastructure spending, consumer credit, retirement savings, and more.

What it's like at work. Underrepresentation is bad enough. But even worse, according to extensive research, is the lived experience of Black employees and managers in the U.S. workplace. African Americans continue to face both explicit racism—stoked by the rise of white nationalism in the past few years—and subtle racism on the job. In the latter category, University of Utah professor emeritus Arthur Brief points to "aversive" racism (when people avoid those of different races or change their behavior around them) along with "modern" racism (when people believe that because Blacks can now compete in the marketplace, they no longer face discrimination). Microaggressions—for example, when a white male visitor to an office assumes that a Black female executive is a secretary—are also common.

Although companies claim they want to overcome these explicit and implicit biases and hire and promote diverse candidates, they rarely do so in effective ways. When Harvard Business School's emeriti professors David A. Thomas and John Gabarro conducted an in-depth six-year study of leaders in three companies, they found that people of color had to manage their careers more strategically than their white peers did and to prove greater competence before winning promotions. And research by Lynn Perry Wooten, the dean of Cornell University's Dyson School, and Erika Hayes James, the dean of Emory University's Goizueta Business School, shows that Black leaders who do rise to the top are disproportionately handed "glass cliff" assignments, which offer nice rewards but carry a greater risk of failure. Other research, such as Duke University professor Ashleigh Rosette's studies of Black leaders, has shown widespread racial differences in hiring, performance ratings, promotions, and other outcomes.

There is also an emotional tax associated with being Black in the American workplace. Research by the University of Virginia's Courtney McCluney and Catalyst's Dnika Travis and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon shows that because Black employees feel a heightened sense of difference among their mostly white peers, their ability to contribute is diminished. "The sense of isolation, of solitude, can take a toll," one leader told them. "It's like facing each day with a core of uncertainty...wondering...if the floor you're standing on is concrete or dirt...solid or not."

Many Black professionals have reported to Toigo that they are expected to

be "cultural ambassadors" who address the needs of other Black employees, which leaves them doing two jobs: "the official one the person was hired to do, and a second one as champion for members of the person's minority group," as one put it. Across industries, sectors, and functions, they also experience the "diversity fatigue" that arises from constantly engaging in task forces, trainings, and conversations about race as they are tapped to represent their demographic.

And Black leaders in particular struggle with feeling inauthentic at work. Research by McGill University's Patricia Faison Hewlin shows that many minorities feel pressured to create "facades of conformity," suppressing their personal values, views, and attributes to fit in with organizational ones. But as Hewlin and her colleague Anna-Maria Broomes found in a survey of 2,226 workers in various industries and corporate settings, African Americans create these facades more frequently than other minority groups do and feel the inauthenticity more deeply. They might chemically relax (straighten) their hair, conform with coworkers' behavior, "whitewash" their résumés by deleting ethnic-sounding names or companies, hide minority beliefs, and suppress emotions related to workplace racism.

As a result of all the above, Black workers feel less supported, engaged, and committed to their jobs than their non-Black peers do, as research from Georgetown University's Ella Washington, Gallup's Ellyn Maese and Shane McFeely, and others has documented. Black managers report receiving less psychosocial support than their white counterparts do. Black employees are



Idea in Brief

THE STRUGGLE

Across the U.S. and the world, diversity and inclusion programs have become imperatives in most organizations, featuring minority recruitment, antibias training, and sponsorship of nonwhite employees for leadership-development programs. Yet African Americans' progress remains slow, and many often feel like outsiders.

SOLUTIONS FOR CHANGE

To jump-start change efforts, organizations should take these steps toward racial justice:

- Shift focus from the business case for racial diversity to embracing the moral one.
- Promote real, open conversations about race.
- Revamp D&I programs to concentrate on taking proactive, concrete steps.
- Manage career development at every stage, from entry-level recruitment to mentorship to CEO succession.

A POWERFUL IMPACT

Companies that embrace and champion policies that help level the playing field will benefit from the experiences, knowledge, and skills of all their employees. The effort to get there may be difficult and uncomfortable, but maximizing the human potential of everyone in the workplace is the ultimate reward.



About the Authors

Harvard Business School's African American Student Union marked its 50th anniversary in 2018. To honor the occasion, Laura Morgan Roberts and Tony Mayo took an in-depth look at how African Americans are faring in today's workplace. The results, Morgan Roberts says, are both humbling and sobering. "When you see how African Americans are emerging as leaders, even when they may be underestimated and underresourced, their journeys are remarkable," she says. "There are incredible stories of leading change. We need to hold those stories up and shine light on them. But there's also a heaviness that comes from seeing how long this

fight has been going on and knowing that in many ways, it's getting harder. Over time there has been less and less support for diversity both legislatively and judicially and a lessening sense of urgency about rectifying inequality, even as it increases."

Laura Morgan Roberts is a professor of practice at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. She began her teaching career at Harvard Business School and has served on the faculties of Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and Antioch University's Graduate School of Leadership and Change. Her research

on how leaders cultivate positive identities in diverse work organizations formed the basis for her study of the influence of African American business leaders. With Mayo and Morehouse College President David A. Thomas, she edited *Race, Work, and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience*, an exploration of the resources and actions needed for organizations to eliminate systemic racism.

Tony Mayo is the Thomas S. Murphy Senior Lecturer of Business Administration in the Organizational Behavior Unit at Harvard Business School. He undertook the research

with Morgan Roberts and Thomas to understand the extent to which opportunities for leadership access and progression for Black professionals have changed (or not). Mayo teaches leadership and organizational behavior and authentic leader development in the MBA program and recently co-created the HBS online course Leadership Principles, designed to help new and aspiring leaders unleash their own and others' potential. He was previously the course head of Field Immersion Experiences for Leadership Development, a required first-year MBA course focused on leadership, globalization, and integration.

"I have always had an admittedly naive belief in the hope and promise of meritocracy, and it's discouraging to see the entrenched structural and systemic challenges faced by underrepresented individuals in the workforce," Mayo says. "These challenges exist even for graduates of elite institutions like HBS. To encourage real change, we need to share the burden that has historically been borne by underrepresented individuals. It's important for people like me, who are in the majority, to play an active and committed role in fostering real conversations and real change."

less likely than whites or Hispanics to say that their company's mission or purpose makes them feel their job is important, that their coworkers will do quality work, and that they have opportunities to learn and grow. Black leaders are more likely than white ones to leave their organizations. It's clear that the norms and cultural defaults of leadership in most organizations create an inhospitable environment that leaves even those Black employees who have advanced feeling like outsiders—and in some cases pushes them out the door.

Relatively high pay and impressive pedigrees don't help much: According to a survey of diverse professionals with bachelor's or graduate degrees and average annual incomes of \$100,000 or more that one of us (Laura) conducted with colleagues at the Partnership, a nonprofit organization specializing in diversity and leadership development, African Americans report the lowest levels of both manager and coworker support, commitment, and job fit and the highest levels of feeling inauthentic and wanting to leave their jobs. Studies

of Black Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School graduates have similarly found that matriculating from highly respected institutions does not shield one from obstacles. When surveyed years and even decades after graduating, Black Harvard MBAs expressed less satisfaction than their white counterparts with opportunities to do meaningful work, to realize professional accomplishments, and to combine career with personal and family life. "Perhaps it sounds naive, but [coming out of HBS] I did not expect

■ A huge gap remains between what organizations are saying and doing to promote inclusion and the outcomes we're seeing for many Black workers and managers.

race to have any bearing in my career," one told us. "I was wrong."

Leading Change

As we said earlier, diversity and inclusion efforts have been gaining traction, and workforces are becoming increasingly multiracial. But given the dearth of Black leaders, we would like to see companies jump-start their efforts in four ways.

First, move away from the business case and toward a moral one.

The dozens of D&I executives we talked to in the course of our research tell us they sometimes feel they've taken the business case for diversity as far as it can go. When Weber Shandwick surveyed 500 chief diversity officers at companies with revenue of \$500 million or more, results confirmed that proving that ROI—showing that inclusive teams yield more-creative ideas that appeal to broader customer bases, open new markets, and ultimately drive better performance—is one of the biggest challenges.

The research on this is clear. A 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely than others to have financial returns above the industry mean. Various studies have shown that teams composed of both white and Black people are more likely to focus on facts, carefully process information, and spur innovation when the organizational culture and leadership support learning across differences.

With the right knowledge, skills, and experience, African American employees and managers can add as

much business value as anyone else. They may have greater insights about creating and selling offerings for minority consumer groups that end up appealing to white consumers as well. As one of us (Tony) showed in research with Nitin Nohria, now the dean of Harvard Business School, and Eckerd College's Laura Singleton, some of the most successful Black entrepreneurs are those who—in some cases *because* they were marginalized—built companies to serve their same-race peers, particularly in the personal care, media, and fashion arenas. Examples include the 19th-century Black-hair-care trailblazer Madam C.J. Walker, Black Entertainment Television's Robert and Sheila Johnson, and Daymond John, who launched the FUBU clothing line.

So, experts agree that diversity enhances business outcomes when managed well. But given the limited progress African Americans have made in most of corporate America, it seems clear that the sound business arguments for inclusion are not enough. At many companies, D&I executives still struggle for airtime in the C-suite and for resources that can move their organizations beyond the tokenism of, say, one Black executive in the senior ranks. Their business cases don't appear to have been as persuasive as those presented by their marketing, operations, and accounting colleagues, which have a more direct effect on the bottom line.

And in more-progressive companies—ones truly committed to inclusion—a different kind of pushback sometimes occurs: If a team incorporates women, Asians, Latinos, and representatives of the LGBTQ community alongside white

men, if it has data geeks and creative types, extroverts and introverts, Harvard MBAs and college dropouts, able-bodied and physically challenged members, isn't it diverse enough? Our answer: Not when teams, especially those at the highest levels, leave out the most marginalized group in the United States.

Thus we turn to the moral case. Many in the U.S. business community have begun to push for a more purpose-driven capitalism that focuses not just on shareholder value but also on shared value—benefits that extend to employees, customers, suppliers, and communities. This movement, toward what the University of Toronto's Sarah Kaplan calls the 360° Corporation, wants corporate leaders to consider both the financial and the ethical implications of all their decisions. We believe that one of its pillars should be proportionate representation and wages for Black Americans.

Why this group in particular? As the *New York Times*' excellent 1619 Project highlighted, we are exactly four centuries away from the start of slavery—the kidnapping, forced labor, mistreatment, and often murder of African people—in the United States. And we are just 154 years away from its end. Although discrimination based on race and other factors was outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the effects of slavery and the decades of discrimination and disenfranchisement that followed it continue to hold back many descendants of enslaved people (and those from different circumstances who have the same skin color). Alarming, racism and racist incidents are on the rise: According to the FBI, the number of hate crimes committed in the

■ ■ We can't simply ask, "What's the most lucrative thing to do?" We must also ask, "What's the right thing to do?"

United States rose by 17% from 2016 to 2017, marking the third consecutive year of increases.

We also can't forget that a compelling business case can be—and has been—made for all the atrocities listed above. Indeed, when invoked absent humanistic and ethical principles, a "business case" has legitimated exploitative actions throughout history. White landowners argued that the economic welfare of the colonies and the health of a young country depended on keeping Black people in chains. White business owners in the Jim Crow South and segregated neighborhoods across the country claimed that sales would suffer if Black customers and residents—who in the absence of land and good jobs had amassed little wealth—were allowed in, because that would turn rich white customers away. And white executives have long benefited because people of color with less access to high-quality education and high-wage employment were forced into low-paying commercial and household jobs, from coal mining and call center work to cleaning, cooking, and caregiving.

So the case for racial diversity and the advancement of African Americans can't be solely about increasing innovation or providing access to and legitimacy in minority markets to maximize revenue and profits. We can't simply ask, "What's the most lucrative thing to do?" We must also ask, "What's the right thing to do?" The imperative should be creating a context in which people of all colors, but especially those who have historically been oppressed, can realize their full potential. This will involve exploring and understanding the racist history

that has shaped various groups' access to resources and opportunities and that undergirds contemporary bias. It means emphasizing equity and justice.

How might this work? Starbucks has made some attempts. In the wake of protests following the 2014 fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police in Ferguson, Missouri, the coffee chain announced RaceTogether, which aimed to spark a national conversation about race relations by having baristas write that phrase on customers' cups. The campaign fell flat because it was perceived more as a profit-minded marketing stunt than as a good-faith effort to change the status quo. Subsequent initiatives, perhaps designed with ethics more squarely in mind, have garnered a more positive response. In 2015 Starbucks launched a hiring program to recruit disadvantaged youths, including African Americans; in 2017 it expanded that program and added one to recruit refugees; and after a racially charged incident at one of its cafés in 2018, it closed all its U.S. cafés for a day of employee antibias training. Consider, too, Nike's decision to launch a marketing campaign headlined by Colin Kaepernick, the NFL quarterback who failed to get picked up by a team after he began kneeling during the national anthem to protest the unfair treatment of African Americans. The campaign created a backlash among anti-Kaepernick consumers and a #BoycottNike hashtag, but the sports apparel brand stood by its tagline: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything." We applaud these steps and hope organizations will go even further in learning how to practice racial inclusion in their workplaces.

Some organizations have invoked the moral case for action in other contexts. Think of how Patagonia supports environmental protections by committing to donate either 1% of sales or 10% of profits (whichever is larger) to advocacy groups. And recall that Dick's Sporting Goods pulled assault weapons and high-capacity magazines from its stores following the Parkland, Florida, school shooting, even though it projected—accurately—that the move would mean a \$250 million hit to sales. (It's important to note that over the long term, none of those companies suffered from their choices.)

Such stances take courage. But by combining the business case and the moral one, leaders can make a more powerful argument for supporting Black advancement.

Second, encourage open conversations about race. As Dartmouth College's Ella Bell and the University of Pretoria's Stella Nkomo note in the introduction to our book, "organizations are in society, not apart from it." And although President Obama's election brought some talk of a post-racial era in the United States, the stories and statistics that have come out in the past few years show that racism still exists, which means that race still matters and needs to be discussed, candidly and frequently, in the workplace.

Those conversations will not immediately feel comfortable. Research shows that although many people are happy to talk about "diversity" or "inclusion," their enthusiasm drops significantly when the subject is "race." Most of us don't like to think very hard about where minorities sit and what power they wield (or don't) within our organizations—



much less discuss it. When we examine who has been excluded in what ways over what period of time, the concept of white privilege might come up. And majority-group employees might express concerns about reverse discrimination. (According to an Ernst & Young study of 1,000 U.S. workers, one-third of respondents said that a corporate focus on diversity has overlooked white men.) Charged topics like these can provoke resentment, anger, and shame. But we need real exchanges about them if we want to dispel the notion that corporations are pure meritocracies and to ensure that everyone feels heard, supported, and authentic at work.

Senior leaders—most of whom are white men—must set the tone. Why? In one survey, nearly 40% of Black employees said they feel it is *never* acceptable to speak out about experiences of bias—a silence that can become corrosive. Another study showed that among Black professionals who aspire to senior leadership positions, the most frequently adopted strategy is to avoid talking about race or other issues of inequality, for fear of being labeled an agitator. Other research has indicated that the only CEOs and lower-level managers not penalized for championing diversity are white men.

To create a culture of psychological safety and pave the way for open communication will require a top-down directive and modeling through informal and formal discussions in which people are asked to share ideas, ask questions, and address issues without fear of reprisal. Managers down the line will need training in encouraging and guiding such exchanges, including inviting Black employees and leaders to

share their experiences—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Participants should be trained to prepare for such conversations by reflecting on their own identities and the comments and situations that trigger strong emotions in them. As detailed by Columbia University’s Valerie Purdie-Greenaway and the University of Virginia’s Martin Davidson, the goal is to shift the entire organization to a racial-learning orientation.

Again, a movement from another context—#MeToo—sheds light on how to do so. Revelations of abuse and harassment and the outpouring of women’s stories that followed, many about incidents that happened in the workplace, forced corporate leaders to focus on those issues. Bad actors were fired, women felt empowered to speak up, and awareness of gender discrimination increased. Although #BlackLivesMatter has had similar success highlighting and sparking discussions around police brutality, there is no #BlackLivesAtWork. There should be.

We see some positive signs on this front. Over the past few years several prominent leaders, including PwC’s Tim Ryan, Interpublic Group’s Michael Roth, Kaiser Permanente’s Bernard Tyson, and AT&T’s Randall Stephenson, have initiated companywide discussions of race. For example, PwC brought in Mellody Hobson, president and co-CEO of Ariel Investments and a prominent African American leader, to talk to employees about being “color-brave” instead of “color-blind” at work, and it has offered guides for continuing the discussion. At Morgan Stanley, global head of D&I Susan Reid has promoted intimate conversations about race in networking

groups and an hour-long forum on race in the current social climate. The latter was moderated by the company’s vice chairman and featured its chief marketing officer, its head of prime brokerage, and a *Fortune* reporter who covers racial issues; it was attended by 1,500 employees, and videos of the event were shared across the firm. Greenaway and Davidson also point to a mostly white male financial services firm that instituted Know Us, a program of small-group cross-race dialogues on racially relevant topics.

Over time these conversations will start to happen informally and organically in groups and among individuals at all levels of an organization, deepening interpersonal cross-race relationships. In one consulting company cited by Greenaway and Davidson, non-Black employees started a book club open to all but focused on Black writers; the group has visited African American museums and historical sites. One-on-one interactions can be even more meaningful, as the psychologist colleagues Karen Samuels (who is white) and Kathryn Fraser (who is Black) describe. “It was important to name our racial and cultural differences and to examine how my perspective was naive regarding her reality,” Samuels explains.

Third, revamp D&I programs.

Any corporate diversity and inclusion program is better than none, but most that exist today are not designed to sustain a focus on racial equity. Many are siloed within the HR department, lack C-suite support, or are given to women or people of color to manage in addition to their day jobs. Some are more show than go, resting on philosophical statements about inclusion rather than



outlining concrete steps for advancing nonwhites. Others limit their efforts to antibias and cultural competence training—preempting problems but, again, not propelling anyone forward. Most take a broad-brush approach to diversity, attempting to serve all minorities plus white women, LGBTQ employees, and those who are neurodiverse or disabled and offering uniform training and leadership development that ignore historical patterns of exclusion, marginality, and disadvantage for each group. They might focus too heavily on recruitment and retention—filling the pipeline and high-potential groups with Black employees but failing to support them past middle-management roles. Most troubling, as Courtney McCluney and San Francisco State University’s Verónica Rabelo have shown, a significant portion of D&I programs try to “manage Blackness”—that is, impose “desirable” and “professional” (read: white) norms and expectations on rising African American stars, thus preserving rather than shifting the status quo. They train Black executives to fit into the existing organizational culture rather than encourage them to broaden it by bringing their true and most productive selves to work.

How can we improve such programs? By tackling their shortcomings one by one. Here are several steps organizations can take.

- Give D&I sustained C-suite support and recognize and reward the people who contribute to its initiatives—for example, by having your chief diversity officer report directly to the CEO and tracking inclusion initiative participation in performance reviews and promotion and pay raise discussions.

- Equip and invite white men to take up the mantle—say, by bringing them into D&I programs and assigning some of them to leadership roles.

- Challenge those running D&I efforts to set clear goals for how representation, organizational networks, and access to resources should change across functions and levels over time and how Black employees’ perceptions, engagement, and well-being should improve, and then measure the efforts’ effectiveness with data analysis and qualitative surveys.

- Shift from preventative measures, such as antibias training, to proactive ones, such as upping the number of Black candidates considered for open positions and stretch roles.

- Abandon one-size-fits-all and color-blind leadership-development practices in favor of courses and coaching tailored to specific groups—or better yet, adopt personalized plans that recognize the multifaceted nature of each individual.

- Help Black employees and rising leaders throughout their careers, including teaching managers the skills they need to support D&I efforts.

- Stop asking Black employees to blend in; instead, emphasize the value of a workplace that embraces all styles and behaviors.

In sum, D&I needs to be an ethos that permeates the entire organization, championed not just by the HR department but by everyone, and especially managers, so that its importance is clear. The Toigo Foundation’s leaders draw a parallel between this idea and the total quality management movement of the 1980s, which, with top-down support and the establishment of key perfor-

mance indicators, became a pervasive way of working and thinking that filtered down to every function and level.

Few companies to date have taken diversity and inclusion that far. But some are moving in the right direction, including JPMorgan Chase, which in 2016 launched a board- and CEO-supported Advancing Black Leaders strategy—staffed and managed separately from other D&I initiatives—focused on filling the firm’s pipeline with Black talent and retaining and promoting those workers. SAP’s Black Employee Network helped launch its partnership with Delaware State University through Project Propel, which offers tech training and skills development to students from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), with the goal of building an employee pipeline. The Network also encouraged SAP to sponsor Silicon Valley’s Culture Shifting Weekend, which brings together more than 200 African American and Hispanic executives, entrepreneurs, innovators, and social impact leaders to discuss diversifying the tech industry. Pfizer tracks numerous D&I metrics and notes that 21% of its workforce—21,000 people—are actively involved in its D&I efforts.

Finally, manage career development across all life stages.

African Americans today are securing good university educations in record numbers. HBCUs, in particular, create a sizable pipeline of young talent for organizations to tap into. Companies can, of course, step up their campus recruiting efforts, but efforts to advance Black leaders must extend far beyond that.

If more African Americans are to rise through the ranks, robust—and careful —

■ Although #BlackLivesMatter has had success highlighting and sparking discussions around police brutality, there is no #BlackLivesAtWork. There should be.

investment in retention and development is required. Research by the University of Georgia's Kecia Thomas and colleagues has shown that many Black women get this kind of support early in their careers, but it comes with a price: They are treated like "pets" whom white leaders are happy to groom, but the further they progress, the more that favored status begins to undermine them. Those who reject the pet identity, meanwhile, are perceived as threatening and face hostility and distancing from coworkers.

Mentoring is useful, and our study of Black HBS graduates shows that they were more likely than their white peers to have been formally assigned to mentors. But they derived less value from the relationship and said that informal mentorship—having senior executives (white or minority) connect with them naturally through work groups or common interests—was more effective. "A mentor helps you navigate the power structure of the firm, especially when there is no one in senior management who looks like you," one study participant told us.

Early in their careers, Black employees need safe spaces to grow and develop and to experience authentic failures and successes without being subsumed in narratives of racial limitation. Managers and mentors can provide the necessary cover. We found that the Black Harvard MBAs who did reach top management positions (13% of women, 19% of men) had been bolstered by networks of supporters.

Sponsorship—that is, recommending Black employees for promotions and stretch assignments—is even more important. Other key factors that have propelled Black Harvard MBAs into

senior executive roles are line or general management experience and global assignments. With many qualified and ambitious people vying for such opportunities, politics often plays a role. So African Americans need more influential people in their corners, pressing their cases to decision-makers.

Candid feedback early on is also critical. This doesn't mean pushing protégés to assimilate (to look and act "more white"); as we've shown, that's counterproductive. It should focus on identifying and enhancing their unique strengths, overcoming skill or knowledge weaknesses, and positioning them to realize their full potential.

At later stages of their careers, Black executives should be seriously considered for high-stakes and high-profile positions and supported in the pursuit of outside interests, such as board seats, that enhance visibility. And while taking care not to tokenize but rather to create opportunities for multiple candidates, organizations can highlight those executives as role models who redefine norms of leadership and can encourage them to pass that baton by transferring connections and endorsements, sharing wisdom through storytelling, and creating opportunities for the next generation to assume senior roles. Needs differ by career stage, a fact that most published models of diversity and inclusion do not address but that is embedded in impactful programs such as the Toigo Foundation, the Partnership, and the Executive Leadership Council.

DESPITE ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS and increasing corporate investment in diversity efforts, race continues to be

a major barrier to advancement in the U.S. workplace. We are far from realizing the principles of equal opportunity and meritocracy. Rather than looking to the few Black leaders who have succeeded as exemplars of exceptionalism who have beaten almost insurmountable odds, we must learn from their insights and experiences along with the experiences of those who didn't make it to the top. Perhaps more important, we need to understand why existing inclusion initiatives have made so little difference. If organizations really want a representative workforce that includes more than one or two Black leaders, their approach must change.

Our hope is that once companies understand the reality of the Black experience, they will embrace and champion policies and programs that actually help to level the playing field—and that where there aren't yet best practices, they will begin the conversations and experiments that will lead to them. This will be hard and often uncomfortable work. But we believe it's worth it, not only for African Americans but also for the many other underrepresented or marginalized groups. Now more than ever before, organizations and society should strive to benefit from the experiences, knowledge, and skills of all, not just a few. And while government policies can help, we believe that corporate leaders can have a much more powerful and immediate impact. As then-Senator Obama said in 2008, *"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."* ☺

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“Dear White Boss...”

What it's really like to be a Black manager.

→ by KEITH A. CAVER and ANCELLA B. LIVERS

DO YOU REMEMBER that first management-team offsite I attended shortly after I came on board? You wanted to introduce me to the key decision makers—the people I’d need to know in my job as director of strategic planning. I appreciated the exposure, and, after the introductions and the requisite banter, I settled in to observe the team’s dynamics and get a sense of the culture. As a new employee, I didn’t expect to participate much in the conversation, although I was prepared to answer the occasional question about a particular strategy or offer any insights from my experience that might be relevant. Instead, I got a barrage of questions about issues related to diversity—what I thought about some new HR initiatives, why Brian and Matthew can’t get along, why Diane left the company, and on and on in that vein.

I answered the questions as best I could—I was a newcomer, after all, and wanted to be polite—but I went home feeling pretty demoralized. Despite my 15 years of experience, despite my solid track record, my new colleagues

appeared to have little interest in my business expertise. Instead, they seemed to have assigned me some special role: official interpreter of minority concerns for the organization.

You may be wondering why I’m bringing this up after all these years—years that have been by many accounts rewarding for me professionally and for the organization as a whole. It’s because on that day, and on so many days before and since, I’ve been made to feel that my white colleagues and bosses don’t see my talents and accomplishments; they see only the color of my skin. I’ve wanted to write this letter for some time now, because despite all outward appearances I am not entirely happy, and at times my work suffers for it. In fact, when I look at my experience and that of my African American colleagues, and then look at my white colleagues in this company and at you, one thought keeps resonating in my mind: It must be good to be king.

OK, that’s unfair. I don’t mean it as an insult. I’m quite sure you don’t feel

like a king and may, in fact, think it’s misguided or even ungrateful of me to harbor such thoughts. I know you’re operating under significant pressures—to keep our division solvent, to stay abreast of current trends, and to be fair and aboveboard in your personal interactions and business dealings, just to name a few. You’ve been a good boss. I’ve learned a lot from you, and I’ve gotten my promotions and raises. And that’s the devil of it. Everything looks fine, but it isn’t.

Just as members of the royalty in medieval Europe were often shielded from the stark realities outside their castle walls, I believe you are in some ways blind to what is happening outside your office door. I truly believe you don’t know how frustrated I often am—how frustrated we African Americans often are—by the lack of acknowledgment or apparent understanding of how our experience in the workplace differs from yours, and how it affects not just our own morale but the health of the organization overall. Have you noticed that the turnover rate for Blacks is significantly higher than it is for our white counterparts? Have you stopped to consider why?

You and I both want this company to succeed. Therefore, I want to find a way for us to work together better, and I don’t think we can do that unless I can be honest with you. Now, I suspect you’re thinking that you’ve got a few honest things to say to me as well. That’s fair. If we’re trying to create an open dialogue, it’s got to be two-way.

But that’s another letter. For now, I’d like to describe to you the miasma that surrounds Black managers in our

Editor's Note

It's easy to assume that other people experience the world the way we do. More specifically, it's very easy for white managers to assume that their colleagues of color face the same basic set of challenges they do. On one level that's true: The work itself is the same. African American and other nonwhite managers have to make their numbers, motivate employees, hire and fire, and plan for the future. But on another level, these managers frequently contend with an atmosphere of tension, instability, and distrust that can be so frustrating they lose the desire to contribute fully or do their best work; they may even drop out altogether. Their white bosses and co-workers are simply unaware of the "miasma," as Keith

Caver and Ancella Livers call this noxious and tenuous environment. They're often puzzled when their nonwhite colleagues quit, seemingly out of nowhere, or appear to overreact to what seems like a minor incident—but which is really the last straw.

We asked Caver and Livers to write a fictional letter from a Black manager to a white boss describing the miasma and what it's like to be different in the workplace. Their letter, with its attendant suggestions, draws on research from interviews and surveys with hundreds of mid- to senior-level African American managers, as well as long years of personal experience. The point, the authors stress, is not to belabor the lack of people of color in the executive suite

or any of the other barriers that limit opportunities in corporate America. Neither is it to extol the virtues and accomplishments of leaders of difference. Instead, their letter portrays the nature of corporate life once Black managers are established—the feeling that they leave some part of their identity at home and the sometimes subtle and often systemic racial biases that inhibit and alienate African Americans. The letter may not apply to every leader, Black or white, or to every organization, but these issues are more widespread than corporate America cares to acknowledge. It should be required reading for white executives—after all, companies can ill afford to allow talent to slip through their fingers.

everyday work lives and help you understand how it can erode my productivity and our relationship in insidious ways. I'm going to give you some examples, although I'm wary of doing so because each story, taken in isolation, may seem trivial. But please understand that I could go on and on. I could give you hundreds of examples—things that happen to me and my Black colleagues and friends every single day. It's the cumulative effect that wears us down.

All I ask is that you test your assumptions after you read what I have to say. I promise to test my own. Then, maybe we can start a dialogue. At the very least, we'll understand each other better. And perhaps, with some work, we'll both be able to change some of the behaviors that prevent us from being true colleagues.

"I Feel Alienated..."

It may surprise you to learn that I often think you can't see past the color of my skin. We have a good working relationship, so why would I say such a thing? I'll bet you don't remember the time when you pinned me to the wall trying to get an explanation for Jesse Jackson's perceived misdeeds or (much earlier in our relationship) the O.J. verdict. How am I supposed to know? I can't explain Clarence Thomas. By the way, how do you account for some of Bill Clinton's questionable behavior? And what about Timothy McVeigh? I know these questions are unfair; we should be able to talk as two individuals about business, current events, and other topics that interest us, without race-based judgments. And yet, you seem to

hold me accountable for explaining the actions of other Black people as if I had some personal knowledge or culpability. It makes me feel like you don't see me for who I am; it makes me feel alienated from you, from this company.

It isn't just you. Look back to that day at the management offsite, when the members of the executive team saw me not as a seasoned strategist but as an authority on race relations in the company, even though I had just started and barely knew the players. And do you remember when you, Jim, and I had lunch in the corporate dining room, not long after the offsite? As I placed my tray on the table, Jim surreptitiously pointed to a table of four African Americans who were having lunch together and said, "Can you tell me why all of the Blacks are sitting together?" I was momentarily taken aback by his question. Not only was I sitting with him, a young Black woman was sitting alone at another table. Clearly, all the Blacks weren't sitting together. I managed to reply, "I don't know, but I've been wondering why all the white people are sitting together."

It may have seemed like a harmless question to you, but it struck a nerve. If Jim hadn't focused on the few Black employees in the room, he might have noticed that the vast majority of the 60 or so patrons eating lunch that day were white, and, with the exception of you and Jim, all the whites were sitting with each other or alone. The Blacks were doing the same thing the whites were doing—having lunch with friends and colleagues. We have the same need for socialization and acceptance that you do. Perhaps more, because for us the workplace is often an uncertain and tumultuous place, in ways you don't see. Unfortunately, rather than enjoying real conversations with our non-Black colleagues, we are often taken off guard by awkward jokes or slips of the tongue—leading us to wonder if these comments betray underlying feelings or assumptions about African Americans in the office.

And I'll tell you another story—an incident I didn't mention to you when it happened, because I was too frustrated and thought you might think I was overreacting. One weekend I went to the office, in my normal, casual weekend attire, to finish up a report you needed to review on Monday. In the lobby, I had the strange feeling I was being watched and turned around to catch the weekend security guard staring at me. Although a few people were milling about and others were going (apparently) to and from their offices, I seemed to be the only one commanding special attention. Before getting into the elevator, I was stopped by an informally dressed young white man who in a stern voice asked to see my identification. This man was not even the security guard. He was someone who worked on a different floor from me, and I didn't recognize him. Please understand, I had worked here for two years, but because I was out of context, he assumed I was a thug. You might chalk it up to an honest mistake, but I can assure you he hadn't challenged any of the white people entering the building, nor had I demanded *his* ID.

Now, when I go into the office on weekends, I make sure to put on khakis and a polo shirt—and when I look at my white colleagues coming in wearing jeans or jogging suits, I feel my resentment growing. What's more, this type of experience is so common that many Blacks have nearly given up on getting our white colleagues to see us as nonthreatening. Little wonder so many of us remain alienated. Little wonder so many of us leave in search of greener pastures—a place where we can be accepted for who we are as contributors and team members.

“I'm Not Sure You Believe in Me...”

I've said that, at times, I don't think you can see past my skin color. To be honest, I also think you sometimes make judgments about me—usually not

intentionally—based on a set of historical and cultural preconceptions. Practically speaking, this shows up in the expectations you and other white managers have for Black employees. Those expectations aren't just demeaning; they can limit our ability (and our will) to contribute.

Do you remember when Robert, our Black marketing director, hired Marie, also an African American? Marie had worked in the marketing field for more than 15 years and had won three national awards. Her work was innovative and exciting, and she was by far the best candidate of the four Robert interviewed. Things became complicated, however, because Robert had also recently promoted a Black man into a position of authority. Like Marie, this manager was clearly the best qualified from the field of candidates. After hiring Marie, Robert began to hear whispers in the halls—suggestions that he was building his own little “ghetto fiefdom”—and before long one of his white colleagues came up to him, slapped him on the back, and said with a laugh, “So white people aren't good enough for you?”

Robert did his best to ignore the comments, but what really got to him was that his boss suddenly seemed to take a greater interest in the details of his group's work—asking for reports and updates he'd never needed when Robert's team was primarily white. Subtly, his boss was letting him know that at some level he expected the team's performance to drop. As we talked later, Robert explained that his frustrations came less from being questioned or joked with than from knowing his department's as well as his own credibility was now suspect. Consequently, he said, on top of

WHAT SYSTEMIC RACISM LOOKS LIKE “DEAR WHITE BOSS...”



Idea in Brief

If your company's like most, it can ill afford to let talent slip away. Yet that's just what many firms are doing, owing to deep-seated assumptions about race and a lack of awareness about how Blacks' and whites' workplace experiences differ.

African American managers often endure an atmosphere of tension, instability, and distrust. This miasma can become so demoralizing that many Blacks lose their desire to do their best work—or simply quit.

This fictional letter—required reading for white executives—is based on the authors' work with hundreds of African Americans. It explains how companies can disperse the miasma's destructive power—and maximize talented managers' contributions.

his ordinary work he was going to have to expend significant energy managing his white colleagues' perceptions if he or his two new managers were to have a chance of succeeding. And the stress took its toll—his group has done outstanding work, but, as you know, Robert recently gave his notice. I wouldn't be surprised if he took Marie with him. He told you he's leaving for an exciting new opportunity;



WHAT SYSTEMIC RACISM LOOKS LIKE

“DEAR WHITE BOSS...”

he told me he’s worn out by the need to constantly defend his department.

The ribbing that Robert took may have been intended as humor, but it feeds the perception among Blacks that our white bosses don’t really believe in us. Here’s another story for you. A Black female reporter told me about a startling but open conversation she had at a convention with the CEO of a news media company. Seeking to gain greater insight into the industry, she queried him off the record about his views and hiring practices regarding Blacks. He replied that he was afraid to hire Black leaders because, he said, “If I fire them, they will sue me.” Do you think people hired under such circumstances are really given the opportunity to succeed? I don’t. Do you think our white counterparts are scrutinized for positions based on the preconceived idea that they will fail? No, I don’t think so either. How can we possibly succeed in an environment where our new bosses have already thought about what’s going to happen when they have to fire us? I think stereotypes based on fear that have festered into “fact” are what’s behind this behavior.

And no matter how successful and senior we are, we’re never immune to these stereotypes. One of my dear, and very talented, Black friends was recently hired as a senior vice president for a major financial institution. With the exception of a few initial interviews and meetings, she did not set foot in the new organization until her first day at the office. As she emerged from the elevator, she was abruptly greeted by a white male who directed her to a small cubicle and asked her to quickly put her things away as they were expecting a new senior officer to ar-

rive shortly. In mock obedience, she went to the cubicle and set her box down, only to return and inquire about the rest of her shipment that had been sent previously. As he stared at her in confusion, she smiled and continued, “Quite frankly, I don’t believe all of my things will fit in this cubicle.” She told me she almost felt sorry for the man as recognition of his error seemed to be slowly reflected in his face first by embarrassment and then by terror. He launched into an awkward and confused explanation of how they were also expecting a new administrative assistant, and how he had mistaken her... and then he fell silent. Instead of berating him, my friend simply smiled and said, “I understand. However, when the new assistant arrives, I hope that you will be far more gracious in welcoming the new member of our team.”

These may seem like extreme examples, but my Black colleagues and I run into this type of preconception all the time. Every day. It’s discouraging, but it also has practical implications for what I and other African Americans can accomplish. Research suggests that you’re more likely to put me into an assistant director’s position, even though I’m fully qualified for the director’s role. Research also shows that mentoring is particularly important for Blacks, yet people choose to mentor others who look like them, making it difficult for us to find mentors. What am I asking you to do? Consider mentoring me, even if I don’t look like you. Consider me for that vice president’s job. Give me a chance at the most technical and operationally critical roles, rather than limiting me to administrative positions. Give me credit for the ability to make good, rational business decisions.

And draw your conclusions about my abilities based on my track record, not on the color of my skin.

“I Don’t Fully Trust You...”

This might be the hardest thing I have to tell you, because we’ve worked together for many years and have accomplished a great deal in that time. But to be honest, our relationship goes only so deep because I feel I can’t fully trust you. Here’s a story for you. A Black friend of mine, James, was at a business dinner with a colleague who may have had one glass of wine too many. “Before I knew it,” James said, “my colleague was telling me about how Blacks get too many breaks and how most of us aren’t smart enough to be in executive positions. This is someone who considers himself my friend. This is someone who’s dealing with clients, peers, direct reports—some of whom are Black or at least not white.” At this point in his story James stopped and just looked at me for a moment. “I got through that meal, and I never let on what I thought. I have never forgotten that dinner, though, and I will never trust that man. I’m always professional with him. But I don’t share more than I have to, nor do I deal with him if I can get around it.”

That story has implications for both of us. The pervasiveness of experiences like James’s takes a toll on African Americans: It slowly eats away at our ability to trust the people we work with. Whether you, personally, exhibit these behaviors or attitudes is less important than the fact that experiences such as this make Blacks wary of encounters with our white colleagues. Furthermore, our mutual history in this country and the way our different experiences currently manifest themselves in the workplace often impair my trust in you. Like James, I don’t let you know about it—I can’t afford to. What’s more, James and I aren’t alone. My own uncle, who had a long and successful career in corporate America, told me before I started work, “You have

to be careful bestowing your trust; your white managers will treat you differently, no matter how well you do.” I know times have changed, but I don’t know if they’ve changed that much, as I often find myself being cautious around some of my white colleagues. This feeling that we need to guard ourselves, and the extra work that it takes to discern our true friends, creates significant additional stress for us.

Do you think the impaired trust and chronic stress that African Americans feel might be contributing to the difficulty of retaining Black employees? Because we often don’t trust you, or, it seems, you us, is it possible that Blacks don’t feel free to fully (or openly) contribute? Do you think James’s “friend” will appropriately use or develop the talents of his African American direct reports? And do you think that our mutual distrust allows us to have solid interpersonal and working relationships? I’d say it means we’re not likely to be as efficient or as effective as we could be. I’d say that some of us are reluctant to take risks we probably should take, because we don’t think you’ll support us if we make a mistake.

“Race Is Always with Me...”

I suspect that by now you’ve picked up one of the main points of this letter. Differences really do matter, although they may matter in ways you probably didn’t expect. One of the big ways they matter is that race is always with us. As a friend of mine said recently, “I don’t think a day goes by that I’m not reminded that I’m Black.” Another friend once recounted a minor, but daily irritation she had to contend with early in her career. “I used to work in a place that was pretty mono-ethnic,” she told me. “And at my job you were expected to wear stockings. But the town I lived in didn’t have stockings the shade I needed. I had to have my mother send them to me. I always thought of it as a mini-Berlin airlift.” As you read this, you probably think that this is such a small thing it needn’t be shared. You

might go on to suggest that if that’s all the inconvenience race causes, we should consider ourselves lucky. Well, I know it’s a small thing. But it isn’t something you have to think about. And more to the point, it’s just one of many small—and large—things we cope with, day after day.

Difference itself is not a bad thing. Research shows that heterogeneous groups make better decisions than do homogeneous ones. Diverse groups also tend to have better problem-solving skills, are more creative, and deal more effectively with complex challenges. And with the increasing globalization of business, we need to be able to relate to numerous ethnic and racial constituencies. But because so many organizations manage difference poorly, they may not be reaping the benefits diversity can bring. I don’t want us to continue making that mistake.

So, what do we do? There’s no easy fix. We’re confronting deep-seated, complex, and highly personal attitudes and assumptions—but opening a dialogue is a good first step. I think we have to be willing to ask ourselves uncomfortable questions and be prepared to deal with some difficult answers. At my last company, one of the vice presidents brought the entire senior management team together for a half-day session with five African American managers, with the goal of putting some of these issues on the table. She stressed that the meeting was to be a safe environment and was respectful and candid throughout. Even with her comments, the meeting got off to an awkward start, but in the end everyone had a chance to ask questions and express their concerns. The senior team came to see that the experience of African Americans at this company is different from that of whites. And frankly, my Black colleagues and I saw that at times we need to drop our guard. We came to see how some of our own experiences and baggage led us to perceive actions differently than they were intended. While I can’t say everything was perfect after that meeting, we did arrive at a shared understanding

and developed something of a shared language for addressing difficult issues or communication lapses on the spot.

There are other ways to build awareness. My cousin, a product manager for a large manufacturer, told me about a new initiative at her company. Each member of the management team belongs to a racially diverse “learning circle,” composed of three or four people who have been charged with studying and exploring issues of difference in the workplace. Periodically, the circle meets to discuss what they’ve learned and how it might apply to them and the company. It’s just a beginning, but at least they’ve begun to uncover some difficult issues, and that’s the first step in tackling them.

I LIKE WORKING HERE. I believe in the company, in our products, and our future. But I have options, and so do my colleagues of color. This isn’t a threat; I simply want you to know that I’m here because I choose to stay. I want our company to succeed, and I want to succeed along with everyone else. I’m an invested and involved partner, and I wish you could see that, in the same way that I wish you could see the miasma that muddies the work environment for me and other African Americans. Right now, you probably can’t see it, but I can tell you about it—and I hope you’ll consider this letter an invitation to begin a conversation. And maybe in the future you’ll see it for yourself. At any rate, thanks for listening. ☺

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WHAT SYSTEMIC RACISM LOOKS LIKE

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The Costs of Code- Switching

The behavior is necessary for advancement—but it takes a psychological toll.

→ by COURTNEY L. McCLUNEY, KATHRINA ROBOTHAM, SERENITY LEE, RICHARD SMITH, and MYLES DURKEE

At this point in my career, code-switching feels natural. I am not even cognizant that I do it anymore.

—30-year-old Black male researcher

IN 2012, A video of President Barack Obama entering the locker room of the U.S. men's Olympic basketball team went viral. In the clip, viewers can see that there's a clear difference between how Obama greets a white assistant coach and how he greets the Black NBA player Kevin Durant. This moment inspired a sketch on *Key & Peele* in 2014 that played off the idea that Obama "switches" how he greets people, depending on whether they're white or Black.





This kind of behavioral adjustment is casually referred to as “code-switching,” which has long been a strategy for Black people to successfully navigate interracial interactions and has large implications for their well-being, economic advancement, and even physical survival.

Broadly, code-switching involves adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities. Research suggests that code-switching often occurs in spaces where negative stereotypes of Black people run counter to what are considered “appropriate” behaviors and norms for a specific environment. For example, research conducted in schools suggests that Black students selectively code-switch between standard English in the classroom and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) with their peers, which elevates their social standing with each intended audience. We also see examples of guidelines encouraging Black people to code-switch to survive police interactions, such as “acting polite and respectful when stopped” and “avoiding running even if you are afraid.”

Based on our research and the work of others, we argue that code-switching is one of the key dilemmas that Black employees face around race at work. While it is frequently seen as crucial for professional advancement, code-switching often comes at a great psychological cost. If leaders are truly seeking to promote inclusion and address social inequality, they must begin by understanding why a segment of their workforce believes that they cannot truly be themselves in the

office. Then they should address what everyone at the company needs to do to change this.

The Upsides and Downsides of Code-Switching

Workplace research suggests that code-switching can generate both positive and negative outcomes for Black employees. In our review of the existing literature, we identified three main reasons people code-switch in the workplace:

- For Black people and other racial minorities, downplaying membership in a stigmatized racial group helps increase perceptions of professionalism and the likelihood of being hired.
- Avoiding negative stereotypes associated with Black racial identity (e.g., incompetence, laziness) helps Black employees be seen as leaders.
- Expressing shared interests with members of dominant groups promotes similarity with powerful organizational members, which raises the chance of promotions because individuals tend to affiliate with people they perceive as similar.

At the same time, we know that code-switching comes with social and psychological repercussions. Downplaying one’s racial group can generate hostility from in-group members, increasing the likelihood that those who code-switch will be accused of “acting white.” Seeking to avoid stereotypes is hard work, and can deplete cognitive resources and hinder performance. Feigning commonality with coworkers also reduces authentic self-expression and contributes to burnout.

For our latest working paper, we investigated how and when these positive and negative outcomes occurred in our sample, how those outcomes affected Black employees, and how code-switching was evaluated by others. The goal of this research was to examine how code-switching as an impression-management strategy informs Black people’s work experiences. We also wanted to examine the pros and cons of this behavior for their professional and psychological well-being.

Our findings, while largely self-reported, add to the ongoing work of understanding how Black professionals navigate mostly white American organizations. Creating workplaces that are inclusive of Black people will enable companies to retain a diverse workforce and bolster innovation. However, Black employees who feel pressure to code-switch may perceive that they are being devalued, which in turn may reduce their commitment to the company and desire to contribute their unique insights. Our work provides an in-depth review of Black employees’ working lives that will allow companies to create better strategies for recruiting and retaining these workers.

The Complexities and Nuances of Code-Switching

To begin our research, we developed a “code-switching at work” scale to assess the extent to which Black people downplayed their race (e.g., “I try not to act like other members of my racial group”), avoided stereotypes (e.g., “I avoid behaviors that would make people at work think that I am lazy”),

and promoted shared interests with majority-group members (e.g., “I try to talk about topics that other people would find interesting”) through adjusting their behavior and appearance. We sent an online survey to Black individuals from alumni pools of two large public universities in the U.S. and a Qualtrics survey panel to assess when and how they code-switched at work. Our sample, which consisted of approximately 300 Black college-educated employees in the United States, indicated the extent to which they code-switch on a 7-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). On average, across all three dimensions, participants responded at a 4, which indicates that code-switching is neither overly present nor overly absent from these employees’ work lives. Clearly, there is some complexity in when and how code-switching occurs.

Through our survey, participants largely acknowledged the benefits of engaging in the three kinds of code-switching listed above. They also articulated how they view and experience these benefits, and how different situations can influence the extent to which they code-switch. We list four of these situations below.

Leadership aspiration. We found that Black employees with high career aspirations for leadership and promotion opportunities actively avoided conforming to Black stereotypes to a higher degree than those with low career aspirations. “I operate under the assumption that most people expect less of me because of my race,” said a 31-year-old Black male anesthesiologist. “Under that assumption, I find it easy

to modify my behavior slightly to consistently outpace expectations of my abilities.” Respondents also named specific stereotypical behaviors that they regularly avoid. “I go out of my way to make sure I don’t appear lazy, because I know the stereotypes,” said a 23-year-old Black female program manager. “People talk, and if you look a certain way, you really have to work twice as hard.” A woman in her 30s who works as a senior research program coordinator told us, “In my actions and verbal communications, I try to avoid any opportunity for someone to label me as the ‘angry Black woman.’ I also carry myself in a professional manner that may seem to be a step above the somewhat casual professional environment of the office.”

“Fit” beyond race. Black employees who perceived that they “fit” in their organization also reported downplaying their race and promoting shared interests with dominant-group members. “I like to laugh, have fun, talk about sports, movies, and music,” said a 53-year-old Black female professor. “I do these things with anyone.” Those who fell into this category perceived more career success than those who did not. Crucially, however, they also were more likely to burn out. We suspect this is because the process of trying to fit in can be exhausting and dispiriting. “I rarely engage in social gatherings with coworkers because there are few things that we have in common, and I don’t feel that they are interested in learning about things that interest me, because they are the majority. Thus, I keep limited relationships with coworkers,”



Idea in Brief

A COMPLEX PROBLEM

“Code-switching” is a behavioral adjustment long used by Black people to successfully navigate interracial interactions. With large implications for their well-being and advancement, it is one of the key dilemmas that Black employees face around race at work.

WHAT WE CAN DO

To navigate these complexities, companies and racial-minority professionals can try these tactics:

- Organizations: Evaluate company culture for pressure to code-switch, address underrepresentation, and focus on creating an inclusive environment.
- Leaders and coworkers: Practice inclusive behaviors daily, bring more of *yourself* to work to encourage others to do the same, and check your biases.
- Black employees: Use strategic code-switching to maximize professional gains while minimizing emotional distress, and assess your environment and your own values to make intentional code-switching decisions.

A WAY FORWARD

Code-switching poses dilemmas for racial minorities that they shouldn’t have to solve on their own. Organizations can and should create environments where it’s not necessary for success.

■ ■ Even when a company encourages employees to bring their authentic selves to work, racial-minority professionals may still perceive that doing so risks appearing unprofessional.

said a 29-year-old Black female financial professional. “I also feel as though I am in a constant battle of censoring/watering down my views, thoughts, and personality for the possibility of being looked at differently than a non-Black man or woman in the workplace if they exhibited the same behavior. It’s exhausting navigating an all-white workplace.”

Vigilance. High levels of vigilant behaviors—that is, always preparing for potential discrimination and mistreatment—were also positively associated with all three dimensions of code-switching at work. One Black man described his vigilance about race as “constantly being under a magnifying glass.” “Due to the questions asked by coworkers, it is clear that they view my presence as a ‘sneak peek’ into Black culture,” he said. “I find myself constantly trying to be aware of my mannerisms, to ensure that I don’t portray myself or the people I represent in a negative light.” Another man, a 31-year-old financial analyst, noted that he’s more vigilant at work because the stakes are so high. “If you’re being judged by some random person, it is easier to dismiss it, because they probably had no effect in your life,” he said. “But when you’re being judged by coworkers in a place that you want to build a career in, it’s not an easy dismissal. Those perspectives hold weight because it can make or break your career here in America.” Finally, a 32-year-old Black woman described vigilance as a day-to-day coping mechanism: “It has been my specific experience that it is simply easier to

anticipate the complaints, jokes, and negative comments from white people and just adapt to their discomfort and ignorance in order to maintain workplace peace.”

Diversity environment. We found that the racial composition of the workplace, as well as whether respondents perceived that their organization had an environment that promoted diversity, influenced the extent to which Black employees code-switched.

While we know that Black employees code-switch when they aren’t well represented in companies, we also uncovered evidence that they downplay their racial identity and promote shared interests with others even when they are equally represented. Why and when is this the case? We have a few theories. It is possible that the stigma associated with Black racial identity affects how larger groups are perceived, especially if they are seen as (or actually are) low performing. In these situations, Black employees may downplay their race and try to reduce the stigma attached to it in the presence of others. Another theory is that non-Black coworkers may be more likely to promote shared interests with others outside of their own racial group when Black employees are equally represented. This may increase the likelihood of Black employees code-switching in return.

We were also surprised to find that Black employees avoided stereotypes about Black racial identity when they perceived that their organization *either* did not embrace diversity (also known as a color-blind ideology) *or* strongly embraced differences (also known as a

multicultural ideology). In other words, a failure to acknowledge differences reduces the ability to recognize discrimination. Black employees might therefore seek to avoid stereotypes in color-blind organizations to avoid differential treatment. In contrast, companies that actively promote a diversity-friendly work environment can make the differences between groups *more* visible. Conforming to stereotypes in these multicultural environments may encourage the belief that Black people have innate and fixed behaviors. Thus, in order to be seen as an individual, a Black employee may code-switch.

All of this is, of course, complex and nuanced; indeed, it seems that no diversity environment perfectly eliminates code-switching. But that may be the point. It can be challenging for a Black employee to navigate *any* organization’s racial composition and diversity climate, especially over the span of an entire career. One 32-year-old digital marketing assistant noted that the worst job he had had was at an organization where the culture was not diverse: “The strain I endured as a person of color just trying to fit in was so taxing,” he said, “that it negatively affected every other part of my life.” But even though he’s at an organization now that’s more focused on diversity, he still struggles to find coworkers to bond with because of his previous experience.

Do Efforts to Code-Switch Really Pay Off?

Our survey revealed the various ways and reasons Black employees code-switch, as well as some of the effects. But



it was unclear whether code-switching enables Black employees to be accepted as “professionals” in the workplace. To answer this question, we designed an online experimental study for almost 350 Black and white participants recruited on CloudResearch and living in the U.S. to determine how they evaluated code-switching behaviors.

The participants were instructed to imagine themselves as recently hired employees at a law firm in a large city. They each read an email from a colleague named either Lamar Matthew Jackson or La’Keisha Renee Jackson, both third-year associates at the firm. In the email, Lamar or La’Keisha shared advice on the “unspoken” ways to succeed at the company: whether you should “be yourself” or try to fit in; use standard English or slang; or wear your hair “naturally” or conform to more traditionally “Eurocentric” hairstyles. Participants were randomly assigned into two conditions in which Lamar/La’Keisha code-switched by altering their preferred name (e.g., “My name is Lamar/La’Keisha, but you can call me Matt/Renee at work”), speech patterns, or preferred hairstyle depending on workplace expectations.

Participants then evaluated whether Lamar/La’Keisha’s behavior was appropriate for the workplace and level of professionalism. On average, white participants evaluated code-switching behaviors positively and perceived those who engaged in these behaviors as *more* professional—particularly when Black employees adjusted their hairstyle to better fit the norms of the dominant group. “You should be allowed to keep your name, but slang and nappy hair

are unprofessional for the workplace,” said one respondent. Another noted, “Looking and behaving professionally are necessary when working at a place like that. Appearances matter. Her name La’Keisha sounds obviously ‘Black’ and some may even think ‘ghetto,’ but Renee is more conservative.”

In contrast, Black participants disparaged the fictitious Black lawyers who intentionally engaged in code-switching to fit in at work, and evaluated them as *less* professional. “Nothing is wrong with ‘ethnic’ names. That is a stereotype that I don’t agree with either,” said one respondent. “My name is my name. If they can pronounce every other name they can pronounce mine.... Use of the English language is understandable, especially in her profession. But to pretty much change her whole identity for a job isn’t right.” Another espoused the belief that “when a person is able to be themselves in a professional setting, they are more productive because they are able to focus on work instead of being distracted by keeping up a specific professional façade.”

Ultimately, our research clearly shows that minorities who code-switch are likely to face a professional dilemma: Should they suppress their cultural identity for the sake of career success? Or should they sacrifice potential career advancement for the sake of bringing their whole selves to work?

This dilemma not only poses career and psychological risks for individuals, it also damages organizations, which may miss out on the distinct perspectives and contributions from racial minorities who are uncomfortable being themselves in the workplace.

What Can We Do About It?

In light of our research, we offer the following recommendations for companies and racial-minority professionals about the complexities of code-switching at work. The suggestions aren’t comprehensive, but will give everyone in your organization a way forward in beginning to tackle this behavior.

ORGANIZATIONS

Evaluate company culture.

Organizations must examine how their workplace culture may create pressure for minorities to code-switch. For example, even when a company encourages employees to bring their authentic selves to work, racial-minority professionals may still perceive that doing so risks appearing unprofessional. Companies should consider if they are asking their Black employees to do something that they will then be punished for. Specifically, are you asking Black employees to bring their whole selves to work only if they also assimilate with dominant cultural norms?

Tackle underrepresentation at all levels. Part of the reason Black employees feel pressure to adjust their cultural-identity expression within the workplace is the chronic problem of minority underrepresentation in these environments. This makes even the slightest cultural “difference” more noticeable. Ensuring that people of color are represented at all levels of the organization will make their cultural identities—including hairstyles, interests, and speech patterns—normative and acceptable.

■ Organizations can make code-switching unnecessary for success by cultivating spaces that value inclusion and difference.

That said, we believe that company diversity efforts that solely seek to increase the number of Black employees, without questioning the inclusivity of the environment, are bound to fail. As found in our data, code-switching also occurs when there are roughly equal numbers of Black and non-Black employees, which suggests that diversifying organizations is only part of the solution.

Consider inclusion separately from diversity. Research shows that valuing diversity is not enough to reduce discrimination toward minorities. In addition to focusing on diversity, organizations need to create inclusive environments for employees to feel comfortable bringing their authentic selves to work. This includes collecting information on employees who are segmented by their social identities and collecting qualitative data for underrepresented group members whose experiences may not register in a quantitative survey.

Creating inclusive environments that work for everyone is challenging, however. Our research finds that Black employees demonstrate less effort to code-switch when organizations deny or overemphasize cultural differences. One way to strike this balance is for company leaders to address issues outside of their companies that affect Black employees' work experiences. Inviting these conversations demonstrates that the company values Black employees beyond their individual contributions to the bottom line.

Additionally, employers can ensure that all of their employees feel included by addressing the presence of differences

and need for inclusion while simultaneously valuing fairness and meritocracy. Companies can explicitly state a desire to foster an inclusive workplace that both values differences and also seeks the most qualified individuals to join the company. Taking it a step further, organizations can also create policies and rules that reflect these values, such as criteria for interviewing and hiring candidates that promote differences and meritocracy.

LEADERS AND COWORKERS

Practice inclusive behaviors.

Inclusiveness is not just a broader organizational imperative; it's also a daily practice. Leaders can be curious and learn about cultural differences and intentionally invite Black employees into their networks and actively listen to their input.

Start with yourself. Is there an identity that is important to you that you may be hiding or downplaying in the workplace? By bringing more of yourself to the table, you may encourage others to do the same. Recognizing your own differences can reveal which parts of you are not welcome at work, deepening your understanding of the professional dilemmas that Black employees encounter when they bring their whole selves to the workplace.

Check your biases. It is important to both recognize difference at work and also be wary of pointing it out when it isn't warranted. If you catch yourself thinking that your Black employee or coworker is not "like" other Black

people, engage in self-inquiry. Where do those thoughts come from? For example, you might like your Black coworkers' hair when it is straightened compared to when it is in a natural style, but *why* do you feel that way? Engaging in this line of questioning promotes being curious about your biases rather than asking Black people to explain their differences.

BLACK EMPLOYEES

Strategic code-switching. Given that Black participants evaluated code-switching negatively compared to white participants in our research, it is important for Black employees to strategically code-switch, if necessary, in a way that maximizes professional gains and minimizes psychological and social distress. For example, previous research found that same-race mentoring provides more social and psychological support than cross-race mentoring. Black employees who strive to suppress their racial identity may miss out on these invaluable relationships.

On the other hand, high-profile careers are typically obtained through networking with and being referred by powerful organizational members, who are typically white and male. In this case, code-switching may increase access to important career opportunities. Several participants shared how they code-switch strategically at work. A 29-year-old assistant director positioning herself for advancement said, "I wear my hair naturally and also maintain my accent, but I do not use a lot of slang or do things that are not professional, regardless of race. It has been a journey to find that



balance in being my true self as a Black woman in a predominately white, elite space.” Another woman, a 30-year-old research nurse, emphasized the specific way she thinks about and enacts professionalism. “At work my goal is to be professional—not to assimilate,” she said. “I dress, talk, and behave in a way that I feel instills confidence in my patients and coworkers. I don’t go out of my way to make my white coworkers [more] comfortable with my presence because it’s not my job to make them comfortable.”

Given the range of career experiences racial minorities have, we recommend that they consider the following when deciding whether or not to code-switch:

Assess your environment. During interviews, onboarding, or joining a new team, it is important to assess when and how others are expressing themselves, and whether they believe you will fit their environment. Are employees behaving differently when senior leaders are present compared to their normal behavior? Are you encouraged to adjust your behavior and appearance depending on the context? For example, are you being asked to meet with Black clients but are less visible on projects that involve non-Black clients? Use these environmental cues to make strategic code-switching decisions.

Assess your values. Because code-switching can be exhausting, it is important to evaluate your workplace goals and values. Are you ambitious? Do you seek advancement no matter the cost? Or is it more important for you to

be your authentic self regardless of the work environment? Are you more willing to code-switch for short-term gains but unwilling to sacrifice your authenticity for an extended time? Knowing what you value for yourself and your career is imperative for deciding if and how to code-switch.

It is important to note that we are *not* suggesting that racial minorities should necessarily code-switch at work. We are highlighting the dilemmas that code-switching poses for their professional and personal lives—dilemmas that they shouldn’t have to solve on their own. Organizations can and should play a pivotal role in creating environments where code-switching is not necessary for success, particularly by cultivating spaces that value inclusion and differences. We believe that further research could capture evaluations of observable code-switching behaviors in realistic settings, which will continue this conversation. 🔄

HBR Reprint BG1906

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WHAT SYSTEMIC RACISM LOOKS LIKE

Quick Takes



1. Why So Many Organizations Stay White

Understanding how race is historically and structurally built into the workplace

→ by VICTOR RAY

ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT race neutral. Scholars, managers, journalists, and many others routinely recognize “Black capitalism,” “Black banks,” and “ethnic restaurants,” yet we think of banks that are run by and serve whites simply as “banks” and white corporations simply as “businesses.” This way of thinking reinforces the fallacy that only peo-

ple of color have race and obscures the broad, everyday dynamics of white racial power within organizations. Hiring for elusive notions of “fit,” locating operations in largely white communities, mandating dress and grooming rules rooted in European beauty standards, and expecting nonwhite employees to code-switch can all subtly disadvantage

nonwhite employees. By leaving white organizations racially unmarked, it becomes difficult to explain why several decades of anti-discrimination and diversity policies ostensibly aimed at equalizing opportunity have done little to alter the overall distribution of organizational power and resources. Such organizational policies, while sometimes helpful in

increasing minority representation, fail to address the racial hierarchies historically built into American organizations. Rather than asking how to bring diversity into the workplace, a better question is why so much power and organizational authority remain in white hands.

I argue that the idea of the race-neutral organization has done a great disservice to our understanding of race relations in the workplace, allowing scholars and practitioners to see racial exclusion as unfortunate aberrations or slight deviations from otherwise color-blind ideals. In reality (and even though we typically do not say this out loud), many mainstream American organizations have profited from and reinforced white dominance. Many still do. Understanding this context is vital to seeing organizations for what they really are: not meritocracies, but long-standing social structures built and managed to prioritize whiteness. Only then can leaders begin thinking differently about race—not as a temporary problem to solve or a box to check, but as a fundamental part of what it means to be a company in America. Only then can they have a better understanding of why their diversity efforts do so little

ARTWORK FROM LEFT: ALEXIS TSEGBA, “COME AS YOU ARE,” 2019; “INTERCONNECTED,” 2019

■ Many organizations are not meritocracies, but long-standing social structures built and managed to prioritize whiteness.

to attract, retain, and promote people of color—and what they need to do to change that.

Just How White Are Organizations?

The simplest way to think about organizational whiteness is through statistics. For example, Black representation at the top of organizational hierarchies, as measured through CEOs in *Fortune* 500 companies, has decreased from six CEOs in 2012 to three today. Steady declines in minority representation at the helm of these businesses since their peak in the early and mid-2000s have led some scholars to claim that the “heyday” of dedicated diversity efforts has ended. University presidents remain mostly white (and male) despite rapidly diversifying student demographics, and academic hierarchies remain deeply stratified by race, with Black men and women, respectively, making up just 2% of full-time professors above the rank of assistant. Black gains among public-sector employees—the economic sector responsible for much of the growth of the Black middle class following the reforms of the civil rights era—have begun to disap-

pear since the adoption of private-sector policies that have increased managerial discretion and loosened worker protections. A recent meta-analysis of field experiments—the gold standard for detecting discrimination, because other potentially explanatory factors are accounted for—shows that high levels of hiring discrimination against Black men have remained relatively constant since the late 1980s, and discrimination against Latinos has decreased little. And despite some progress diversifying within individual firms, between-firm segregation has increased over the past 40 years and *Fortune* 500 boards remain 83.9% white.

But our thinking must go beyond the numbers; it’s the *reasons* these numbers persist that matter. Even though discrimination has been officially outlawed and most organizations would never say they’re racist, exclusion is visible in many organizational processes. These range from “race neutral” grooming codes that coincidentally target Black hairstyles to the white normativity built into seemingly nonracial organizational expectations. For example, many elite jobs use nebulous notions of “fit” or collegiality and end up

hiring new employees with similar backgrounds to the existing white workforce. That’s because this seemingly race-neutral selection criteria can make whiteness a kind of unstated credential, particularly in light of historical processes of segregation and discrimination that have helped create racially homogenous workplaces. Discrimination is also built into the routine ways organizations do business. White corporations may undermine antidiscrimination law as courts see the presence of diversity policy as a good-faith effort (regardless of that policy’s effectiveness). Predominantly white corporations like Airbnb may fuel gentrification by reducing access to affordable housing, and white banks may syphon resources from Black communities through discriminatory mortgage lending that redistributes Black wealth to white banks.

In each of these examples, maintaining the position that these negative outcomes for people of color result from neutral market forces without a racial component helps reinforce racial segregation and inequality. Segregation is not natural. Rather, segregated outcomes result from explicit policy—or, more charitably, implicit bias. These processes are especially dangerous

when we believe that an organization has nothing to do with race.

Here, then, is the question: How and why did race become embedded in the everyday—and, one could argue, the ordinary—aspects of doing business or getting a job?

How Segregated Workplaces Came to Be

Part of the answer has to do with what sociologists refer to as a “social structure”: a resilient distribution of resources that is bigger than any one individual and has sometimes profound implications for our daily lives. Inheritance taxes that allow the relatively nonproductive children of the rich to live a life of ease or racially segregated and underresourced schools are both examples of legally institutionalized social structures. Social structures are powerful for at least two reasons. First, they can become taken-for-granted backgrounds that make unequal relationships seem normal and natural while shaping individual actions (think, here, of gender norms). Second, they distribute resources in ways that are designed to last (think, here, of continued residential segregation despite

■ Ignoring how white organizations help perpetuate racial harms virtually guarantees that these harms will continue.

the absence of legal barriers to integration).

In the United States, white organizations are a kind of social structure combining ideas about race (for instance, who should manage and who should work) with organizational resources. The forming of this structure goes all the way back to the central role slavery played in the formation of the country. By limiting access to property and the material resources necessary to found and run organizations, slavery created an unequal competitive environment whose effects have yet to be fully overcome. Under slavery, Black people *were* property, lacking protection for basic bodily integrity. Race marked the possibility of ownership, as even manumitted and free people of color often had their possessions appropriated through state-sanctioned, and therefore legal, violence. Following formal abolition, arrangements such as convict leasing, Black Codes, and sharecropping allowed the continued organizational exploitation. Similar processes of expropriation were imposed on Native Americans (land seizure and broken treaties; the reservation system; attempted extermination), Mexican Americans (guest-

worker programs that limited citizenship and access to the legal protections necessary to start organizations), and Asian Americans (Japanese internment; burning of businesses in Chinatowns; land seizures; laws restricting immigration; employment and labor competition). Differential protection and enforcement of law, systematic undereducation, and the appropriation of resources have been historical constants for people of color. White organizational formation was often facilitated by these often-legal exclusions. Many dominant American organizations—leading businesses and elite colleges, for example—were founded in an environment of legally sanctioned and socially accepted exclusion.

Although the interests of workers and management are often portrayed as inherently antagonistic, throughout U.S. history, white workers and management sometimes have put this economic antagonism aside in favor of a shared commitment to racial exclusion. For instance, the Reconstruction-era National Labor Union, according to W.E.B. Du Bois, “did not want the Negro in his unions, did not believe in him as a man... [and] asked him to organize separately.” Rejecting

Black workers allowed for some types of paid labor to become a white prerogative and forced nonwhites into the most degraded and dangerous jobs. In this environment, management often separated workers by race and expected people of color to labor in menial positions and defer to whites. Jobs were mapped onto stereotypical hierarchies with race as an often-literal qualification, such as when the refusal to hire Black women as industrial laborers contributed to their concentration as domestic workers. Racial divisions also proved financially useful to management, as Black workers were paid lower wages for the same work (a problem that remains with us today). Although Black workers are now overrepresented among union members, incorporation came through hard-fought struggles stretching across the 20th century. From A. Philip Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to the Memphis sanitation strike that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was supporting when he was murdered, Black labor struggled for inclusion.

Even predominantly nonwhite organizations can ultimately be subject to white control. For instance, in her brilliant book *The Color of*

Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap (Belknap Press, 2017), the legal scholar Mehrsa Baradaran shows how segregation and the very capital that Black people had accrued in Black banks were ultimately used against them. Under Jim Crow, Black banks were reliant on customers who were disadvantaged in the labor market relative to white workers, especially where segregation ensured that Black customers could not patronize white banks. This reliance on relatively poorer customers left Black banks less able to invest and accrue profits. Segregation between banks also put Black organizations at a disadvantage. According to Baradaran, because banks often rely on one another for liquidity during crises, white banks’ refusal to lend to Black banks set the latter up for failure. Following Jim Crow, Black banks have remained relatively undercapitalized and thus more likely to fail. White banks are still able to leverage the racially unequal playing field to increase their profits at the expense of their Black competitors.

And despite the lasting mythology of American racial progress, these types of organizationally produced racial inequalities are by no means a thing of the past. Predatory



subprime lending—which targeted Black and Latino neighborhoods—similarly relied on racial segregation to generate profits. This racially unequal distribution of risk contributed to the massive destruction of wealth for Black and Latino families. During the Great Recession, Black families lost half of their wealth and Latinos lost 67% of theirs.

What Can Organizations Do?

Many attempts to intervene in racial inequality assume that discrimination is a rare event, the intentional actions of bad (or at least unenlightened) actors. Employers choosing to hire a white felon before a Black person without a criminal record or research that shows employers are 50% more likely to call back equally qualified job applicants with “white-sounding” names are important examples of the individual approach. And many Americans readily acknowledge white power when it is tied to brazen spectacles like the 2018 neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville. The violence of white-supremacist events and the odiousness of the accompanying racial ideology make such displays easy to condemn.

Evidence of individual discrimination is obviously important. But these bad-actor or explicit views cannot account for the broad empirical patterns of organizational segregation and the deeply unequal distribution of organizational resources. It is also important to think about how the normal (and legal) functions of predominately white organizations gain from and exacerbate racial inequalities. Current legal remedies for discrimination rely on the bad-actor model. Employees can potentially sue for intentional discrimination, for example, if an employer uses a racial epithet. However, these legal remedies would have little to say about discretionary promotion procedures that may favor white employees or a business choosing to locate in a neighborhood that makes it inaccessible to people of color because of residential segregation. Indeed, this latter active discrimination may become moot if poor access to public transportation and long travel times weed people of color out of hiring pools.

I encourage scholars and managers to think about how organizations create and distribute resources along racial lines in ways that may not necessarily be considered legally illegitimate or discriminatory but

may nonetheless shape racial inequality. Hospitals that provide substandard care have contributed to the staggering statistic that Black women are 243% more likely to die in childbirth than white women. Schools that provide a substandard education for Black students contribute to the so-called achievement gap. And churches more dedicated to segregated schools than racial equality have contributed to the country’s growing racial polarization. In each of these cases, thinking that the organization in question has nothing to do with race may be especially harmful, as it assumes that only the active animus of physicians, teachers, or clergy—not the everyday tasks of providing health care or disciplining students—could produce racially unequal outcomes. Assuming race neutrality disregards the vast historical evidence of the centrality of race in shaping American organizations. Ignoring how white organizations help perpetuate racial harms virtually guarantees that these harms will continue. It is safer, and likely more realistic, to start with the assumption that organizations are contributing to racial inequality unless the data shows otherwise.

There are no easy answers when it comes to creating

more diverse and equitable environments. And given how deeply American organizations have been shaped by racial inequality, I am not hopeful that the type of structural changes needed to make organizations more equitable will appear on the horizon anytime soon. Colleges and universities are retreating from successful affirmative action policies, organizational segregation is persistent, and whiteness is a key credential for moving up organizational hierarchies. At a minimum, leaders should stop thinking about discrimination and inequality as rare events and understand that racial processes often shape behavior in the absence of ill intent. Conversations about organizational inequality need to refocus from a narrow concern with feelings and racial animus to the massive inequalities in material and psychological resources that organizations distribute between racial groups. Recent calls for reparations can provide a model, as these have forced some organizations to reckon with how their roots in slavery contribute to continued racial inequality. Leaders could also begin to examine how their decisions about location and hiring, among other choices, exacerbate inequalities. White



organizations have attempted to deal with racial inequality while wielding meager tools. Companies that are serious about changing patterns of racial inequality need to move beyond diversity and inclusion and toward reparations and restitution.

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2. Hiring Discrimination Against Black Americans Hasn't Declined in 25 Years

→ by LINCOLN QUILLIAN, DEVAH PAGER, ARNFINN H. MIDTBØEN, and OLE HEXEL

RACE IS OFTEN at the forefront of American conversation. Lately, it has emerged with new urgency around discussions of policing, immigration, First Amendment rights, and even professional football. And yet, although we are confronted with dra-

matic examples of ongoing racial tensions, most white Americans remain convinced that race is no longer central to one's opportunities in life. Polling data shows that many believe these lingering conflicts represent the actions of a few bad apples and aren't in

sync with the larger trend toward systemic racial equality.

Are these beliefs accurate? What do we know about long-term trends in racial discrimination?

Discrimination is often manifested subtly and is notoriously difficult to measure in any context. And until recently we have not had much information that we could use to reliably assess changes in discrimination over time. However, in our recent study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, we were able to analyze trends in discrimination by performing a meta-analysis from all available field experiments pertaining to one area: racial discrimination in hiring. We focused on experiments performed since 1990, when field studies became more numerous and their methodology improved. We analyzed data from 24 field experiments, which included data from more than 54,000 applications across more than 25,000 positions.

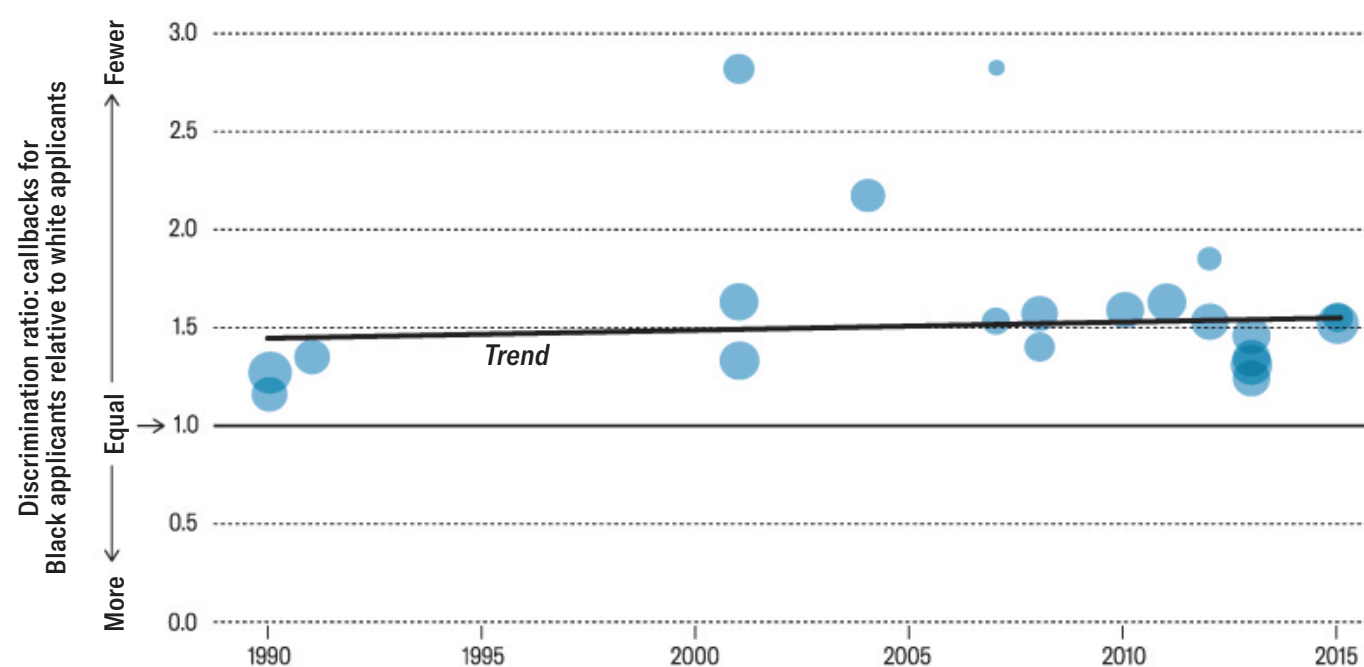
We chose field experiments as a sample because they are widely regarded as the most valid method to assess discrimination. They generally come in two major types: résumé audits, in which fictitious résumés with equivalent qualifications and ethnically identifiable names

SIMÃO LEITÃO/EYEM/GETTY IMAGES

■ In hiring decisions, Blacks remain substantially disadvantaged relative to equally qualified whites.

Black Americans Have Faced the Same Amount of Hiring Discrimination for the Past 25 Years

An analysis of 21 field experiments contrasting white and Black Americans, based on 42,708 applications for 20,990 positions.



Note: Larger circle size denotes higher study reliability; it measures the reliability of the study's estimate of discrimination relative to other studies and is influenced by the number of applications a study sends out, among other factors.
Source: "Meta-Analysis of Field Experiments Shows No Change in Racial Discrimination in Hiring Over Time," by Lincoln Quillian et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2017

are submitted; and in-person audits—done with trained pairs of testers, white and nonwhite—in which participants apply for jobs. By examining the rates of callbacks, or invitations to job interviews, for white and nonwhite applicants with equivalent qualifications, these studies provide high-quality measures of rates of discrimination in hiring. Broadly, our meta-analysis of callback rates from all existing field experiments showed evidence of discrimination against both Black and Latino applicants. Since 1990,

white applicants received, on average, 36% more callbacks than Black applicants and 24% more callbacks than Latino applicants with identical résumés.

When it comes to Latinos, we found some evidence of a decline in discrimination over the past 25 years. Because of the small number of field experiments including Latinos, however, statistical tests indicate the evidence of decline is inconclusive.

For Black applicants we found no change in hiring rates over time. In the figure

above, the dots represent results from 21 studies contrasting white and Black applicants, based on a total of 42,708 applications for 20,990 positions. The line shows the overall trend. The line slants slightly upward, but it's statistically indistinguishable from a flat line.

We wondered if this level of discrimination might be influenced by applicant education, applicant gender, study method, occupational groups, and local labor market conditions. When we controlled for these factors, we found that

none account for the trend in discrimination. Under these and other adjustments, our results suggest that levels of discrimination against Black job applicants haven't changed since 1990.

Our results do not address the possibility that hiring discrimination may have substantially dropped in the 1960s or early 1970s, during the civil rights era, when many forms of direct discrimination were outlawed. Further, our results pertain only to discrimination at the hiring point, not at later points in the employment relationship, such as with wage-setting or promotion decisions, so meaningful reductions in discrimination may have taken place in the employment relationship after a person was hired. But our results do reveal that at the initial point of entry—hiring decisions—Blacks remain substantially disadvantaged relative to equally qualified whites, and we see little indication of progress over time.

What might account for the stubborn persistence of hiring discrimination? At first glance, our findings seem to contradict other trends. Attitude surveys indicate that overtly prejudicial beliefs have declined, and endorsement of the principles of equal treatment regardless of race has increased. Americans



appear to have become more concerned with diversity and inclusion, and in a small number of elite firms, affirmative action practices have made meaningful changes in the opportunities available to racial minorities.

At the same time, however, assessments of subtle forms of racial stereotypes and measures of unconscious bias have shown little change. The vast majority of hiring is subject to little oversight, and compensatory policies that address racial bias reach a small fraction of hiring overall. Together, these trends offer little support for optimism about racial progress in the U.S. While some people may assume that discrimination has declined over time, through increasing diversity in institutions along with other cultural changes, it seems as though, at least in terms of hiring, this expectation doesn't meet with reality.

We believe that our results provide a strong rationale for affirmative action policies and reflect the continuing need for the enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation. Even among well-intended employers, racial bias may lurk in hiring decisions. Whether conscious or not, bias continues to affect decision-making, and we find little evidence that this pattern will diminish

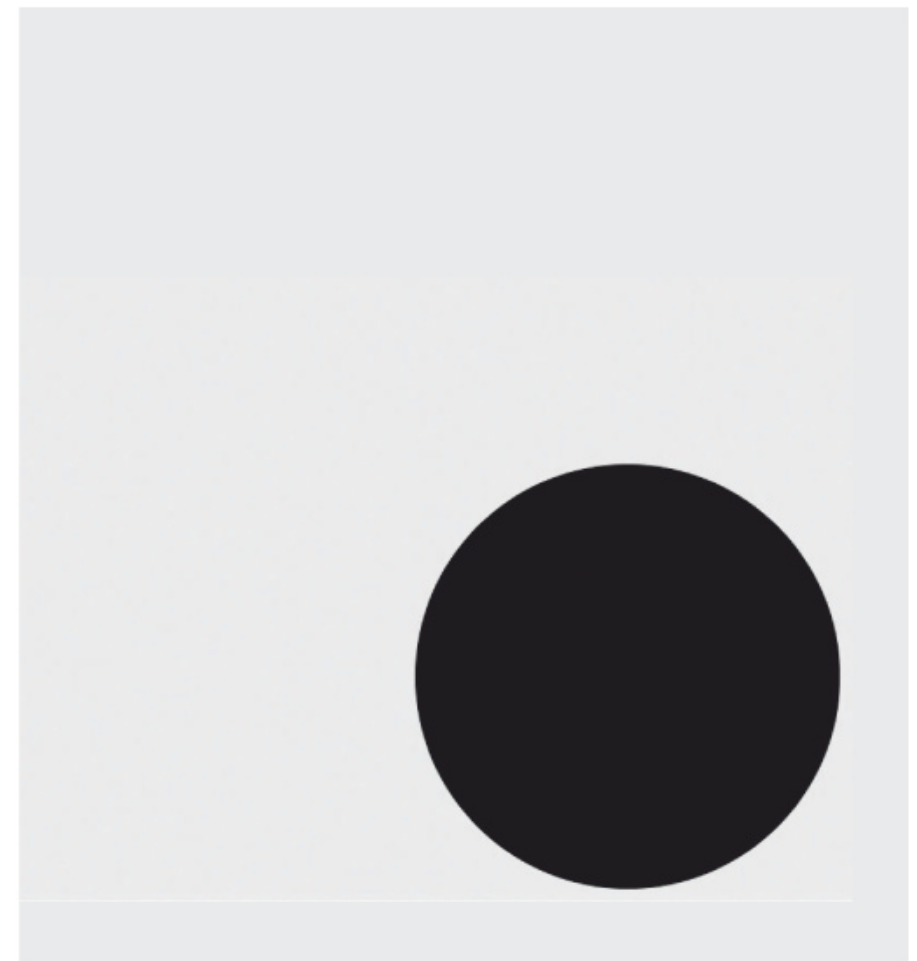
on its own. Instead, more-active intervention may be needed to reduce discrimination at the point of hire.

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3. Why Aren't Black Employees Getting More White-Collar Jobs?

→ by MICHAEL GEE

FORTY YEARS AGO, two companies were known for aggressively recruiting minorities on college campuses: IBM and Xerox, both considered hot tech companies of that era. My senior year in college, a Black sales rep from IBM

encouraged me and a group of fellow Black students to consider a career with the company. It offered a competitive salary and extensive training, and had several minority leaders in management. When I joined the company,

HAYON THAPALIYA

■ The national conversation on minority executive employment seems to have resulted in minimal impact.

my branch sales manager—someone I considered a field office general—was Black, as were many of my instructors. The job began my long career in the high-tech industry.

Decades later, I've seen little progress in minority executive employment. The national conversation and media focus on the subject seems to have resulted in minimal impact. And yet the ecosystem supporting diversity is quite large—government agencies, formal corporate diversity programs, universities, consultants, and dozens of civil rights advocacy groups. So why has change been so slow?

For one thing, political rhetoric has created public tumult about the drivers of middle-class decline: globalization, technology, and immigration's impact on U.S. jobs. Another recurring theme is an allegedly unlevel playing field for white males created by public- and private-sector diversity programs (affirmative action) to attract and promote a more diverse workforce. And the courts have weighed in on “reverse discrimination” cases, slowing the growth of diversity in some universities and companies.

As a longtime African American executive who's skeptical of reverse-

discrimination claims, I wanted to find answers to a few questions: What exactly do Black employment numbers look like today? How are Blacks faring in promotions? Are Blacks' gains in executive and management ranks keeping pace with gains in the professional workforce?

The Numbers

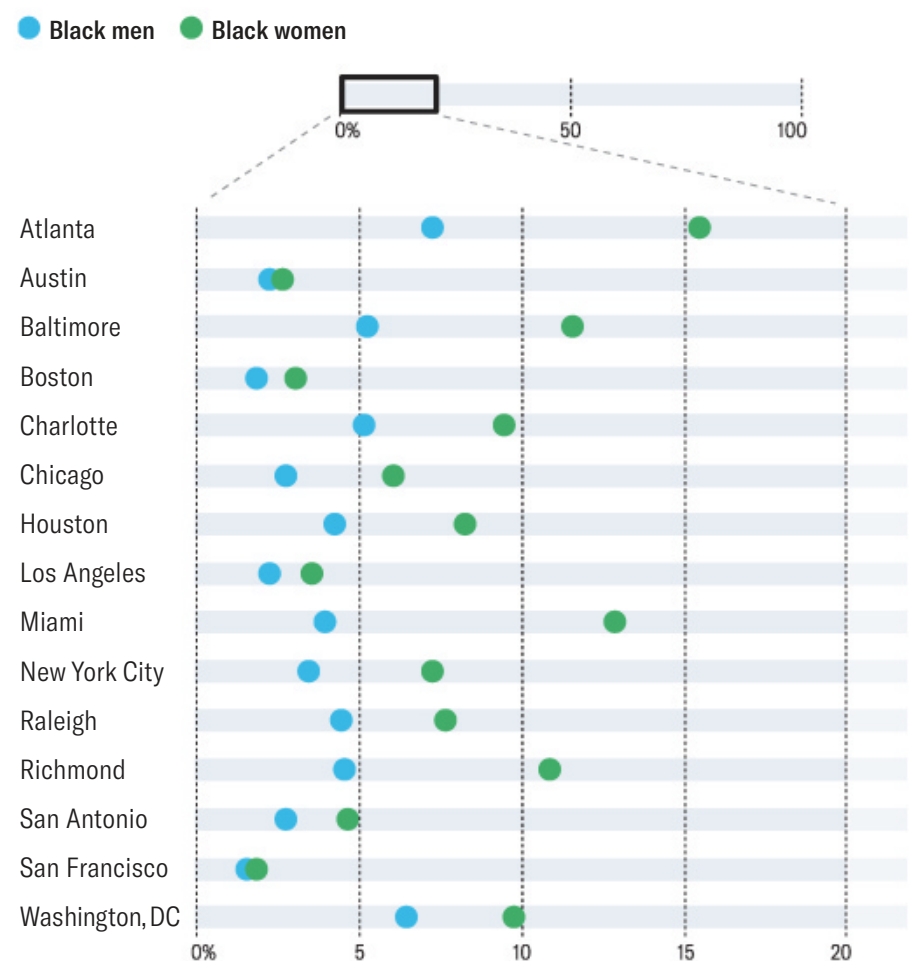
Detailed analysis of employment numbers can help us understand racial and gender income inequality in America. A review of white-collar employment data from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reveals serious gaps in income, promotional opportunities, and advancement for minorities and women of all races.

An innovative model developed by the Ascend Foundation provides special insight. Using an EEOC database of employment data by race, gender, and job classification, it assesses management diversity with a ratio of minorities' representation in management to their representation in nonmanagerial professional levels, a metric that Ascend calls the *executive parity index* (EPI).

EPI helps us understand how well each race and gender is being promoted up the management pipeline

In Many U.S. Cities, Black Workers Are a Small Share of the Professional Workforce

Black men and Black women as a percentage of professional employees, selected large U.S. metro areas



Note: The EEOC defines “professional” as an occupation “requiring either college graduation or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background.” Source: Ascend Foundation Analysis of 2015, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission data

and, in effect, whether the corporate ecosystem has been successful in creating a more diverse workforce. By taking into account the percentages of minority employees in both management and the professional workforce, an EPI analysis is a more

insightful metric than simply the percentage of executives or employees who are minorities.

The Ascend Foundation's analysis shows that white men (with an EPI of 1.81) are by far the most represented group in management; exec-

■ Corporate equal opportunity statements are not associated with increased employee diversity.

utive parity is a ratio of 1.0. Following them are Hispanic men (1.07), white women (0.65), Black men (0.63), Asian men (0.56), Hispanic women (0.49), Black women (0.30), and Asian women (0.24). (The EPI numbers are bleak for many of these groups, clearly, but in this article I'm most concerned with Black men and women.)

There are disturbing trends in economic mobility for African Americans nationwide. White men continue to dominate executive and managerial roles at companies with more than 100 employees. Small businesses, those with fewer than 100 employees, are not included in the EEOC database.

A national review of 2015 data on white-collar employment shows:

- White men are 61.3% of executives nationally and 81% above parity when compared with their 33.8% representation in nonmanagement professionals.
- In 1967 African Americans' median household income was 55% that of whites; in 2016 that number was 61%.
- Black men and women still represent a very low percentage of the professional white-collar workforce (less than 8%), given their overall representation in the population.

A Closer Look by City

We can also use the EEOC database to review how Black men and women are faring in cities across the U.S., which can help identify leaders and laggards in diversity hiring. Notably, when it comes to Black employment, the high-tech regions of Austin, Los Angeles, Boston, and the San Francisco Bay Area lag behind all other major cities.

Recent articles have highlighted the migration of African Americans to "New South" cities, where job opportunities are perceived to be better. Homeownership rates and entrepreneurship (self-employment) may also be higher. Professional employment data, however, suggests that more opportunities are still required at the local city level. (Atlanta and Washington, D.C., are among the leaders in percentage of Black professionals.)

These low numbers aren't entirely surprising. Corporate board commitment to and investment in diversity programs have been inconsistent. Decades of "one step forward, two steps back" government policies have also been ineffective. The EEOC's policies, too, have not been enough to increase diversity. In his July 2015 testimony to the EEOC,

Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, a sociology professor at UMass Amherst, commented, "There is no evidence that corporate equal opportunity statements are associated with increased employee diversity." In my opinion, EEOC oversight and enforcement of antidiscrimination laws nationally have also fallen short.

There are encouraging signs: As a potential solution to wage discrimination, a growing number of states and cities prohibit questions about salary history on job applications. Nationally, there are increasing numbers of minorities in the managerial pipeline, greater public awareness of income inequality, and the emergence of the #MeToo movement. Many people, especially Millennials, agree and believe that Black lives matter. And more corporations are acknowledging that they need to do better on diversity.

To continue to improve, we need benchmarking of employer-reported public data to help identify corporate leaders in diversity. The Center for Employment Equity at UMass Amherst is one group that is making EEOC data easily accessible to the general public with the development of an online portal. Companies can (and should) examine their own industry

performance and look for ways to improve. Further research on diversity data will help separate fact from fiction in this vitally important issue.

Despite the expansive growth of the U.S. economy over the past 40 years, diversity hiring has not kept pace. Bottom line, if racial and gender minorities think they perceive limited advancement opportunities—the so-called glass ceiling—they are right.

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4. Asian Americans Are the Least-Likely Group in the U.S. to Be Promoted to Management

→ by BUCK GEE and DENISE PECK

ASIAN AMERICANS ARE the forgotten minority in the glass ceiling conversation.

This was painfully obvious to us while reading the newly released diversity and inclusion report from a large Silicon Valley company: Its 19 pages never specifically address Asian Americans. Asian men are lumped into

a “non-underrepresented” category with white men (we’ll say more about that later); Asian women are assigned to a category that includes women of all races. In contrast, the report addresses Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans as distinct categories. Ironically, the chief diversity

and inclusion officer of the company remarked about its efforts, “If you do not intentionally include, you will unintentionally exclude.”

But excluded from the report was the fact that Asian Americans are the least-likely racial group to be promoted into Silicon Valley’s management and executive levels,

even though they are the most likely to be hired into high-tech jobs. This was a key finding in a 2017 report we coauthored for the Ascend Foundation (“The Illusion of Asian Success”), analyzing U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) data on Silicon Valley’s management pipeline.

Across the country, the results are the same. Our analysis of national EEOC workforce data found that Asian American white-collar professionals are the least-likely group to be promoted from individual contributor roles into management—less likely than any other race, including Blacks and Hispanics. And our analysis found that white professionals are about twice as likely to be promoted into management as their Asian American counterparts.

It is easy to understand why Asian American representation in the workforce may not seem to be an issue. In some key measures, Asian Americans are the most successful U.S. demographic—more highly educated and with higher median incomes than any other racial group. More significant, Asian Americans are 12% of the professional workforce while making up only 5.6% of the U.S. population. This fact underlies the potential blind

■ Asian Americans are given little priority or attention in diversity programs.

spot for many companies: Because Asian Americans are not considered an under-represented minority, they are given little priority or attention in diversity programs. We have found that in many companies throughout the country, Asian-related programs are geared toward cultural inclusion, not management diversity.

When we were tech executives in Silicon Valley, our corporate responsibility was to grow the business by building a highly skilled and motivated workforce through hiring, developing, and promoting the best talent. The large numbers of Asian Americans in the professional workforce confirm that businesses are finding qualified Asian Americans to hire; however, the disparity between the lower ranks and the executive levels suggests either that leadership potential is disproportionately lacking in Asian Americans or—much more likely—that companies have not done an adequate job of identifying and developing Asian American talent.

These issues aren't confined to the tech industry. Similar concerns were raised about the legal profession in a 2017 study coauthored by Goodwin Liu, associate justice of the California Supreme

Court. Published by Yale Law School and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the report found that Asian Americans are well represented in law—they're more than 10% of the graduates of the top 30 law schools—yet “have the highest attrition rates and lowest ratio of partners to associates among all [racial] groups.”

A similar finding with New York banks was reported in *Bloomberg Businessweek* in 2017. As one example, Goldman Sachs reported that 27% of its U.S. professional workforce was Asian American, but only 11% of its U.S. executives and senior managers, and none of its executive officers, were.

The list of industries goes on. The Ascend Foundation, a pan-Asian organization that published our 2017 paper, was established by a group of pan-Asian accounting partners. They had found that although more than 20% of the associates in many of the larger accounting firms were Asian American, very few were being promoted to the partner level.

And this is not just a problem in private industry: While Asian Americans were 9.8% of the federal professional workforce in 2016, they are only 4.4% of the workforce at the highest federal level.

Fortunately, some companies have found ways to close the gap.

Several years ago, one global energy company commissioned an internal task force to review the status of women and minorities in its leadership pipeline. Reporting to the executive staff, the task force found insufficient gender and racial diversity in the pipeline, including Asian diversity, and recommended specific actions. With strong CEO and executive support, the company quickly moved to identify potential leaders and significantly increase its spending for leadership training for women and minorities. For its Asian workforce, it partnered with a major business school to integrate culturally specific training into its leadership development program for Asian American managers.

This example provides the key steps that corporations can take to address the Asian glass ceiling.

First, it is necessary to be data-driven and to carefully review the retention and promotion rates of Asian Americans in an analysis of race and gender. Our research suggests that men and women of different races encounter progression barriers at different levels of the management ladder. Our

anecdotal experience leads us to believe that it also varies across different parts of the organization (for example, engineering versus marketing versus sales), though we would need specific data to explore that idea.

Second, it is essential to have open, visible, and proactive support from the CEO and the executive team. Without open support, it is difficult to get organizations to shift priorities and budgets to fund and organize new programs. Just as important, without proactive support, institutional inertia can create procedural potholes that can derail new initiatives.

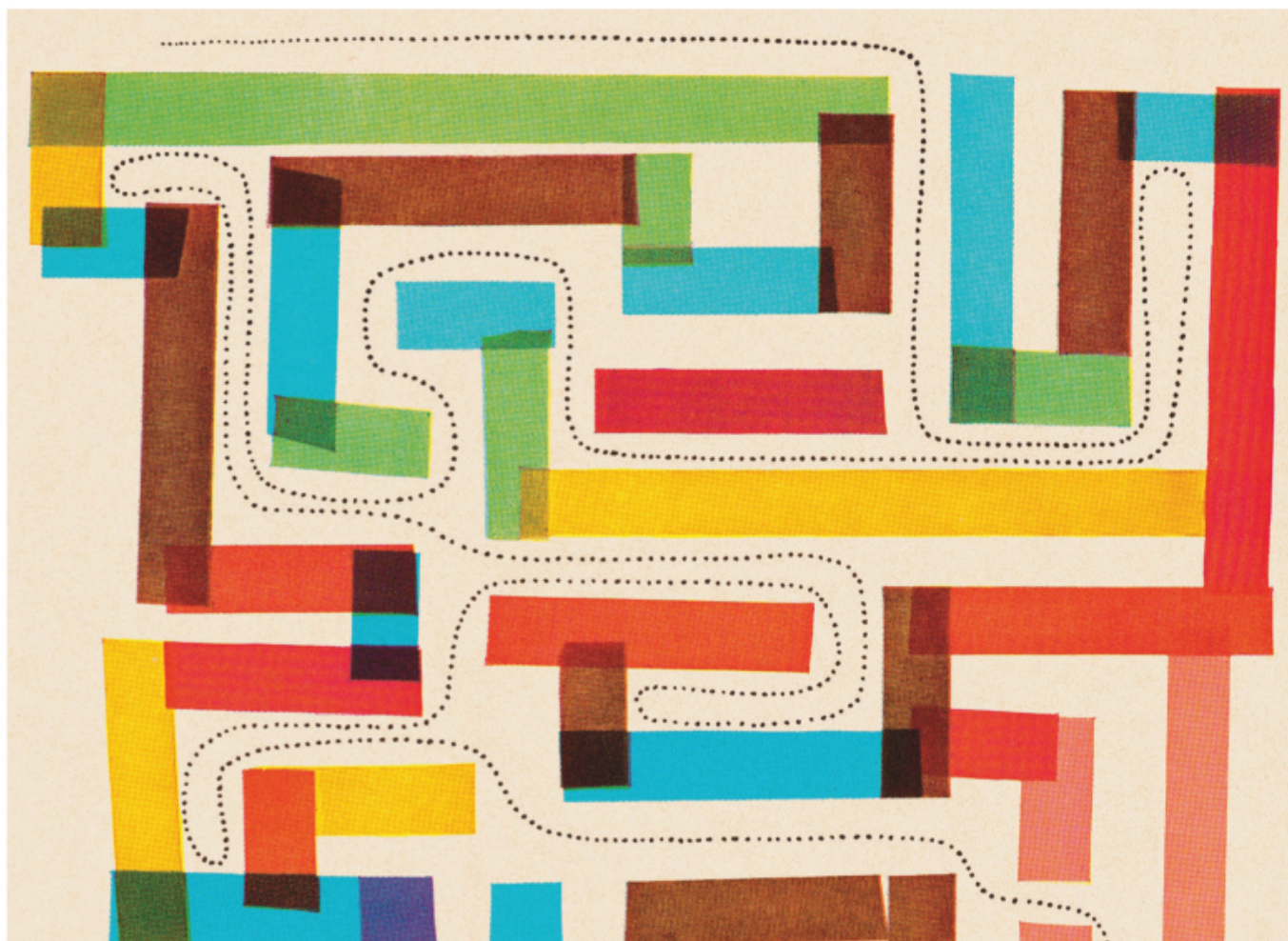
Finally, it is critical to institutionalize Asian American leadership as one of the goals and sustained priorities of the company's leadership development process, not just as a onetime special diversity project.

These steps would make for a diversity and inclusion report we would love to read.

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5. How Black Women Describe Navigating Race and Gender in the Workplace

→ by MAURA CHEEKS

A FEW YEARS ago I started attending classes for my part-time MBA. What I noticed almost immediately was that my experience in the classroom largely mirrored my experience of close to a decade in corporate America:

I'm consistently one of very few Black women and Black people in the room.

In September [2018], Ellen McGirt published an article in *Fortune* exploring why there are zero African American women running *Fortune* 500

companies. This lack of female leadership is important to explore, but what are the experiences of Black women in the workplace before they make it to the C-suite? I wanted to find out how other Black women navigate the

intertwined barriers at the intersection of race and gender.

Over the course of a year I worked with Professor Elizabeth Morrison, vice dean of faculty at NYU, to interview 10 women of color to understand the challenges they face in the workplace, how they deal with those challenges, and how their coping mechanisms affect their chances of long-term success.

Here are the highlights of what I learned about their experiences at work in corporate America:

“Your work is judged, plus other intangible things.”

A lot of women told me that they code-switched, which involves embracing the dominant culture or vernacular among certain groups (like coworkers, for example) and switching to a more authentic self when around friends and family.

One woman I spoke with, a successful entrepreneur who was interning at a tech start-up before going to business school, excitedly described her most recent position where, for the first time in her career, she reported to a Black woman. She said she “performed better” and was “a lot more comfortable and confident.” She described what it might have been like if she had to code-switch

■ Many Black women feel they have to dampen aspects of their personality to fit into the culture of their workplace.

instead: “Being judged on your work versus mentally performing well would have been more taxing. Your work is judged, plus other intangible things. You second-guess yourself, and that affects your confidence.”

She wasn’t the only woman to mention the mental strain associated with trying to live up to a professional ideal originally created to stifle, rather than support, diversity. Another woman declined a full-time position at the Obama White House because she felt inhibited by stereotypes. “I was given opportunities to stay at the White House, but I didn’t because I felt like people were very judgmental of my race, and my gender, and everything. I feel like my ideas weren’t getting traction like others from white guys were.”

A 20-something woman at a top-tier consulting company described the first time she worked for a client team that included other people of color. The client was a prison, and her team was making recommendations for how to group specific inmates together. “I said, ‘You wouldn’t put Nicki Minaj in a cell with Remy Ma.’ Everyone instantly got it, and it was a beautiful thing. I wouldn’t be able to make that analogy on another team. It was the project I

performed the best at. That partly had to do with the fact that your clients look like you and it’s easier to build that relationship.” Because she performed so well on the project, she gained social capital with her supervisor. It’s a direct example of how working with people you can relate to can positively influence your career.

There was a general disillusionment among these women about how their colleagues view the world versus how they experience it. One woman described crying in her hotel room after reading about a police officer killing a person of color. She had been traveling with coworkers for a business trip, and they were all on a text chain to coordinate logistics. That same day a Hollywood couple had also broken up, and the conversation on the text chain focused on the Hollywood gossip, never addressing the shooting. She said, “I remember watching [the shooting] and crying in my hotel bed. And then having to go to work. And no one checked in for your well-being.” This is the reality for many Black women at work in America. They care deeply about the issues affecting the Black community, but that feeling isn’t generally supported or acknowledged in the workplace.

“We are tied to other people of color.” Each interview revealed just how much these women’s experiences at work are viewed through a larger filter of race and class.

“I can go into my office right now and meet five people. Out of that, four will be white,” described one woman I spoke with. “Out of those white people, their whole family might be of generational wealth. That one Black person, they can more than likely identify someone in their family who is living in the projects, living in poverty, or doesn’t have education beyond high school level. That is the experience of Black people in general—that we are tied to other people of color who are in poor situations.”

This isn’t to say that every white person in corporate America comes from generational wealth, but it’s impossible to divorce current statistics about race in this country from Black women who have to go to work every day. Black women in corporate America aren’t immune to the realities facing Black people in general or the historical relationship between race and resource access in this nation. Instead, they’re forced to put that aside when they sit down at their desk.

This forced separation between hardships facing the

Black community and the institutional whiteness of the white-collar job can be mentally taxing and make it harder to perform well at work.

“My mentors talk to me about dimming my light.”

It’s not uncommon for Black women to feel like they have to make others feel comfortable when they’re in a group (especially if that group is made up of people who look nothing like them).

The women I interviewed talked a lot about having to dampen aspects of their personality to fit into the culture of their workplace. One woman told me, “My mentors talk to me about dimming my light. I always thought I had to bring that down to make people comfortable.” These women often felt that their organizations “weren’t ready” for them and that they couldn’t be their authentic selves in the office at the risk of making others feel uncomfortable or hurting their chances of professional advancement.

These sentiments echoed similar things I’ve experienced. I’ve been told to smile in the office, and to make sure I don’t come across as too aggressive, I tend to wait until everyone else has spoken before choosing to weigh in.



Part of that is simply because I'm an introvert. But another part is because I've been conditioned by society and its predominantly white institutions to feel that as a Black woman I might be perceived as aggressive, bossy, and selfish when I speak my mind compared with a man or a white woman making the same statements. Many people feel as though they can't be their true selves in the workplace at the risk of seeming unprofessional. These interviews made it clear that for the most part Black women don't expect to be able to bring their full selves to the workplace and still get ahead.

"If you have no one in your corner, you get weeded out." Almost every woman I interviewed touched on the idea of needing to find sponsorship in the workplace—of finding someone at your company who can advocate for raises, projects, and promotions on your behalf. One woman who works as a consultant put it like this: "Sponsorship is very important. The Black community where I work, we have a hard time finding that. It's not a formal program, but it's part of the review process. People ask, who was in this person's corner? You need sponsors to

get projects. Staffing is really anxiety-driven. You interview for every project. If you have a sponsor, you might not need to interview. If you have no one in your corner, you get weeded out."

Black women often find sponsorship challenging in their organizations if they can't relate to the people they work with. Because of this, they may often attribute their lack of advancement in the company to a lack of sponsorship.

"YOU CAN'T BE what you can't see." These are the famous words by Marian Wright Edelman, and they are as much true for children dreaming of becoming rocket scientists or astronauts as they are for Black women climbing the corporate ladder.

Aside from not seeing professional role models, there are real business consequences to consistently being in the minority at work. Differing from the majority at work creates what Katherine Phillips, Nancy Rothbard, and Tracy Dumas call *status distance*, that is, how far away you are from the perceived norm and power structure in your company. When you know that you suffer from status distance, you'll seek to conceal status-confirming information about yourself.

Exclusion forces people to deviate from their authentic selves. And authenticity is integral to well-being.

And beyond the emotional and mental toll, homogeneity and bias can have real career consequences for Black women. Researchers found that when a group is shown photos of different people, Black women's faces were least likely to be recognized out of a group of white men and white women. Statements said by Black women in a group discussion were also least likely to be correctly attributed compared with Black men, white women, and white men. Black women in leadership positions are also more likely to be criticized or punished when making mistakes on the job.

While I tried to limit my own bias as much as possible by interviewing only women whom I did not know and sticking to the same set of questions for every interview, it was impossible to completely remove my own personal experience from this project. Without it, I wouldn't have been driven to undertake it in the first place. This is also a small sample size, which makes it impossible to draw sweeping conclusions. Though the fact that consistent themes emerged, and that out of 10 Black

women, zero regularly work with other women of color, means that if true equality in the workplace is what we're after, sooner or later we'll have to address the issues that are unique to women of color—and Black women in particular—in the workplace.

For Black women it's not just a pipeline issue. Once they are in the door, they need to feel supported in ways that are specific to being a woman of color so that even if they are alone on their team, they will realize they're not alone at all.

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6. Even at “Inclusive” Companies, Women of Color Don’t Feel Supported

→ by BETH A. LIVINGSTON and TINA R. OPIE

LAST FALL, WE began a conversation on an episode of HBR’s *Women at Work* podcast about an important, though difficult, topic: how to forge deep and meaningful relationships at work between women of varying races or ethnicities, with the goal of collective advancement in the workplace. This idea of shared sisterhood “allows us to share struggles together, realize that we’re not alone, that the pain we’re going through is something bigger than us,” one of us (Tina) said. It involves designing strategies, dismantling structures that prevent advancement, or even just offering mutual support so that everyone can cope together.

But we don’t know a lot about what might precipitate these relationships in the workplace. And we don’t have a fully clear picture of what shared sisterhood actually looks like. Who, exactly, is involved? How do we know when it’s working? Shared sisterhood could involve a meaningful experience between two women within an organization. It could reflect a broader organizational commitment around inclusiveness and diversity. Or maybe it involves an interplay between the two. We decided to analyze these possibilities.

Understanding High-Quality Connections and Inclusive Workplaces

The initial step in our analysis involved reviewing what we know about how people build connections and community at work through each of these lenses.

The first is individual relationships. High-quality connections, as defined by scholars Jane Dutton and Emily Heaphy, are relationships where people can feel safe to express and display emotions, withstand conflict or strain, and be creative and get work done. These researchers, along with John Paul Stephens, also argue that these connections are usually born out of short-term, positive interactions between two people. They can transform how people experience work because they encourage respectful engagement that can empower employees and affirm their identities and their competence.

Second is the organizational culture. Inclusive climates are defined as those in which a company has implemented fair employment practices, proactively integrated the identities of employees, and promoted inclusion and participation

DELMAR DUNSON/GETTY IMAGES

■ Inclusive climates are more effective when Black women do not have to rely on their coworkers too much in their day-to-day job performance.

in decision-making. These climates have been shown to reduce interpersonal conflict that can occur from demographic differences and to make turnover from that conflict less likely to occur.

And yet the research on inclusive and diverse work climates has often overlooked their ability to generate positive, high-quality outcomes, such as innovative solutions or increased feelings of solidarity and support from diversity. The latter is the primary focus of our shared sisterhood research, which we're undertaking with the help of HBR readers.

Our Research

In the fall of 2018, we asked a series of questions using a broad survey of the HBR readership. We looked at readers' opinions on both individual and organizational elements of inclusion at their workplaces.

On the individual side, we asked questions about whether people could be emotionally vulnerable with their coworkers, a construct called "emotional carrying capacity." Sample questions included: "I can fully express my emotions to my coworkers" and "When I talk about my emotions with my coworkers, I feel like it is constructive." We wanted to

know whether women trust their coworkers with their emotional vulnerability. This, we hypothesized, could be the *individual* precursor to being able to build a shared sisterhood community.

We also looked at whether the answers to the following questions could lead to women of different races perceiving their coworkers as emotionally available. This, we hypothesized, could be the *organizational* precursor to shared sisterhood:

1. *How much do you believe that your organization promotes an inclusive climate—one that values diverse voices and has fair and open procedures?*
2. *How interdependent is the work that you do? In other words, how much do you depend on other people at work to do your job?*
3. *How much do you trust your organization to do right by you?*
4. *How competitive is your work environment?*
5. *How large is your work group?*
6. *How large is your company?*
7. *Are you at a director or higher level in your organization?*

We had 778 women from across the country respond (and many from outside the U.S. as well), ranging in age from 19 to 71 (average age of 42 years). Within the U.S. sample, respondents self-identified as 76% white (N=620), about 5% Black (N=41), 4% Asian (N=32), 5% Hispanic (N=41), and 3% multiple races (N=24). Most (83%) worked between 31 and 50 hours per week and had been in their field for more than five years (79%). Power analysis suggested that our sample of Black and Hispanic respondents was large enough for the comparisons we conduct below.

The Results

Generally speaking, we found that both individual connections and inclusive climates are good for the promotion of emotional vulnerability. However, we saw some interesting results when we broke down this finding on the basis of race and ethnicity of respondents. When personal success or performance is dependent upon coworkers, who is more or less likely to be vulnerable?

For Black women in more-interdependent jobs—that is, jobs that require more interactions with others to get their work done—inclusive climates led to lower levels of emotional vulnerability.

This indicates that, though having an inclusive climate was overall a good thing for all women, the more that Black women's job execution depended on others, the less emotionally vulnerable Black women were willing to be. This suggests that an inclusive climate alone may be insufficient to foster Black women's high-quality connections with coworkers. Importantly, a similar pattern emerged for Hispanic women.

We then directly compared the experiences of white and Black women. We found that inclusive climates help Black women feel supported most often when their work is independent. That is, inclusive climates are good and important, but are more effective when Black women do not have to rely on their coworkers too much in the course of their day-to-day job performance.

We asked our respondents to tell us a little bit more about situations where they may have felt excluded or unsupported at their jobs, with the hopes that it would provide context for our findings. We found that many nonwhite women brought up not being invited to social events (including lunch) or being "accidentally" excluded from information-sharing opportunities. Being "left out,"

■ Black and Hispanic women may be unwilling to be emotionally vulnerable with white women in the workplace.

even in strong, team-based environments, led to resentment and mistrust of their coworkers. Perhaps being left out of more-minor events like this signaled that the women might be excluded from more-important events or activities that could have larger career implications.

We also heard stories of Black women feeling a lack of support on the job. Here's what one 46-year-old white female respondent shared about a conversation she had with a coworker of color:

"[My coworker] confided to her manager that a recent conversation about equity had taken a lot out of her, as it brought up emotions tied to past experiences. Her manager, who is white, responded that these conversations are hard for everyone. My friend felt that the manager was not understanding of her particular experience and felt invalidated by the tone-deaf response."

The manager minimized the coworker's feelings by equating them with everyone else's and not demonstrating individualized consideration for her specific situation in regard to racial equity. The coworker sought out support for her emotions from her supervisor and was rebuffed.

Luckily she was able to share her feelings with a colleague afterward (which points to at least the start of shared sisterhood).

This was echoed in responses from Black women who noted that, even when their company overall was nonthreatening in terms of diversity and inclusion, they didn't feel like they belonged. "[I] have never felt included in my organization. And I have worked there for 10 years," a 41-year-old Black woman noted. "[I] feel isolated," a 36-year-old Black woman said, because there weren't ways for her to feel comfortable sharing information in her work group. This discomfort may be due to a lack of information-sharing opportunities and/or an organizational culture that inhibits information sharing. For example, a 42-year-old Hispanic woman in a very interdependent team noted that "anyone who provides critical feedback is quickly thought of as not a team player or, worse yet, called a whiner."

Those who found supportive workplace environments had to work to find them. As a 45-year-old mixed-race woman noted after feeling left out by her interdependent work group at a company she described as overall inclusive,

"I searched for who would be the ones that I could trust." Another 53-year-old Black woman in leadership spoke of how she channeled her initial mistrust into supporting others as a leader: "[I am] now particularly sensitive when others are being excluded from an activity or conversation."

So, what does all this mean? While organizations seem to have devoted more time, attention, and resources to creating inclusive climates at work—and women report benefiting overall—this is likely not enough to support shared sisterhood. You can't build meaningful connections between women of different races and ethnicities, let alone ask them to advocate for their collective advancement, if Black and Hispanic women report being excluded from the relationships required to make an organization run.

So, as organizations increasingly structure interdependent, team-oriented work, it is important for leaders to realize that certain demographic groups may be more or less willing to be emotionally vulnerable when working on highly interdependent tasks. If I rely on you to do my job, I may consider it risky to be emotionally vulnerable with

you because my work might be affected by your reaction to my emotional vulnerability. Our data suggests that Black and Hispanic women may be unwilling to take that risk with white women in the workplace.

In the future we plan to delve deeply into two additional questions. When shared sisterhood does occur, what does it look like for women on a daily basis, and what impact does it have on important organizational outcomes like group productivity, innovation, and individual commitment and retention? Our next steps will involve more-sophisticated data analysis, as well as follow-up interviews with many of the respondents who indicated a willingness to share more about their work contexts and experiences. We will report back, filling in more details about what shared sisterhood means—both to individual women and to the organizations for which they work.

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7. The Problem with “Color-Blind” Philanthropy

→ by CHERYL DORSEY, JEFF BRADACH, and PETER KIM

FOR TOO LONG, philanthropists have taken a “color-blind” approach to grant making. Even when grounded in a well-meaning attempt at equity, ignoring the implications of race on the work they fund has only served to disadvantage people of color.

Consider the fight against teen smoking in the U.S. There have been impressive declines overall, with philanthropy playing a pivotal role. However, when disaggregated by race, the data tells a different story. While African American teens

actually smoke at much lower rates than white teens, by the time they are adults, the rates are about the same—with tragic results because African Americans die at much higher rates from smoking-related illness. However, the majority of prevention programs and policies have targeted teens, thus missing the adult window when African Americans typically start to smoke.

This is just one example of why racial equity needs to be a deliberate part of philanthropic design. Race in and of itself is still a predictor of life outcomes. Take infant mortality: White women with a high school diploma or a GED have lower infant mortality rates than Black women with MAs, JDs, or PhDs. The racial disparities of Covid-19 infection rates and death tolls tell a similar story.

The Racial Equity Institute (REI) has come up with the helpful groundwater metaphor for structural racism that illustrates why race is intricately linked to our biggest social problems. Imagine if you find a lake with one dead fish—most of us would analyze the fish. But if you come to the same lake and half the fish are dead, then it makes more sense to analyze the lake. What if there are five lakes, and in every lake half the fish are dead? Now it is



time to consider analyzing the groundwater to find out how the water in all the lakes ended up with the same contamination. Color-blind philanthropy misses the structural racism in the groundwater.

That's why our organizations—Echoing Green and The Bridgespan Group—wanted to take a deeper look at the impact of racial inequities in philanthropic funding. Our report, *Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table*, shows that philanthropic efforts that don't consider race run the risk of exacerbating existing racial disparities, or even creating new ones.

On the basis of what we've learned through our work and this research, we're calling for two big changes in the world of philanthropy: Funders need to (1) financially support more leaders of color and (2) pay more attention to race-conscious solutions.

Support Leaders of Color

In interviews with more than 50 sector leaders, including nonprofit executives of color and philanthropic staff, our study found that leaders of color face multiple barriers, especially when funders don't see race:

Getting connected to potential funders.

Leaders of color don't have the same access to social networks as their white counterparts and therefore have fewer opportunities to connect to the philanthropic community.

Building rapport with potential funders.

Funders' interpersonal bias sometimes shows up as mistrust and microaggressions, which inhibits relationship building and creates emotional burdens for leaders of color.

Securing support for their organization.

Funders often lack understanding of culturally relevant approaches and therefore dismiss strategies, approaches, and methods of evaluation that they aren't familiar with.

Sustaining relationships with current funders.

Because funders often don't fully trust race-conscious approaches, even if they fund them, leaders of color often have to work harder to convince them that such approaches are working. This makes the grant-renewal process more difficult, resulting in organizations led by leaders of color getting fewer

unrestricted and long-term grants.

It's no wonder that stark funding disparities exist. Take Echoing Green's applicant pool, a group that is considered among the sector's most promising early-stage organizations. Looking at just its highest-qualified applicants (for example, those who progressed to its semifinalist stage and beyond), our research found that revenues of the Black-led organizations are 24% smaller than the revenues of their white-led counterparts. When it comes to the holy grail of financial support—unrestricted funding—the picture is even bleaker. The unrestricted net assets of the Black-led organizations are 76% smaller than their white-led counterparts.

Disparities persist even when considering factors like issue area or education levels. For example, among organizations in Echoing Green's Black Male Achievement Fellowship, which focuses on improving the life outcomes of Black men and boys in the U.S., the revenues of the Black-led organizations are 45% smaller than those of the white-led organizations, and the unrestricted net assets of the Black-led organizations are 91% smaller than the white-led organizations—despite focusing on the same work.

These inequities are neither new nor limited to Echoing Green's applicant pool. Organizations led by people of color, including Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity and CHANGE Philanthropy, a coalition of seven organizations that promote equity, have been sounding the alarm about philanthropy's funding gap for a while now. Although the coronavirus pandemic is wreaking havoc on the finances of all nonprofits, because organizations led by people of color already often live close to the financial edge, we are hearing from our networks that these nonprofits are even more vulnerable right now.

It's especially important to support leaders of color because these leaders often bring strategies that reflect the racialized experiences of communities of color and the issues they face. As philanthropist Jeff Raikes told us: "Philanthropy is overlooking leaders of color who have the most lived experience with and understanding of the problems we are trying to solve. That needs to change."

Pay Attention to Race-Conscious Solutions

To achieve more-equitable results, philanthropists also

■ Funders need to financially support more leaders of color and pay more attention to race-conscious solutions.

need to apply a race-based lens when considering what programs to support. Several philanthropists and foundations have already started to do this. Consider these organizations who are putting racial equity at the center of their grant making:

- In 2016 the **San Francisco Foundation** (SFF) focused its entire program strategy on racial equity and economic inclusion. It strives to give grants to organizations with leadership teams composed of a majority of people of color. This racial equity lens can also be seen in SFF's Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund, which makes capacity grants to nonprofits addressing four issues particularly relevant to people of color: support for low-wage workers, homelessness and renter protections, food security, and addressing racial bias, partly in response to a rise in harassment and violent hate crimes against Asian Americans.

- The **Ford Foundation**, in an effort to think critically about how it collects and acts upon diversity data from its grantees, recently revised its entire grant proposal process to better track racial data on the boards and executive leadership teams of its grantees. Ford's BUILD portfolio is a \$1 billion five-year investment that extends multiyear and

general operating grants to social justice organizations working to reduce inequality. The idea behind BUILD is not only to give larger, longer, more flexible grants but also to allow grantees—many of whom are leaders of color—to determine how to spend the funding.

- **Chicago Community Trust** (CCT), one of the nation's oldest community foundations, is a more recent convert, announcing in November that its strategic plan for the next decade would anchor on racial equity. The foundation's goal is to close the wealth gap between Latinx, Black, and white households in Chicago. White families in Chicago hold nearly 10 times the wealth of Black and Latinx families. According to CEO Helene D. Gayle, the decision marks the foundation's recognition that many of the biggest issues plaguing Chicago—violence, health, education—have root causes in racial and ethnic wealth inequality. Gayle invokes John F. Kennedy when she explains CCT's goal to close Chicago's racial wealth gap: "We choose to take on this issue, not because it is easy, but because it is necessary."

These changes won't just benefit the communities these organizations serve.

Consider the "curb-cut effect," as Angela Glover Blackwell, founder of PolicyLink, calls it. Pressured by disability advocates, the city of Berkeley installed its first curb cut—the small ramp in the sidewalk originally intended to help those in wheelchairs—in 1972. Technically it wasn't the nation's first, but their proliferation in Berkeley became the first time people noticed who actually benefited—and it wasn't just the disabled. The curb cuts became popular with parents pushing strollers, workers pulling heavy carts, business travelers wheeling luggage, anyone suffering joint and knee pain, runners, bikers, and the list goes on.

Blackwell notes, despite what some people may think, equity isn't a zero-sum game where helping one group hurts another. Instead, everyone benefits from equity.

When it comes to philanthropic funding, the racial disparity is clear. But, the curb-cut effect is a constant reminder of the difference closing the racial funding gap can make. Change cannot happen without funding more leaders of color and funding them more deeply. The question now becomes: Will philanthropists do what is necessary? 🗳

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Why Diversity Programs Fail

And what works better

→ by FRANK DOBBIN and ALEXANDRA KALEV

BUSINESSES STARTED CARING a lot more about diversity after a series of high-profile lawsuits rocked the financial industry. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Morgan Stanley shelled out \$54 million—and Smith Barney and Merrill Lynch more than \$100 million each—to settle sex discrimination claims. In 2007, Morgan was back at the table, facing a new class action, which cost the company \$46 million. In 2013, Bank of America Merrill Lynch settled a race discrimination suit for \$160 million. Cases like these brought Merrill's total 15-year payout to nearly *half a billion* dollars.

It's no wonder that Wall Street firms now require new hires to sign arbitration contracts agreeing not to join class actions. They have also expanded training and other diversity programs. But on

balance, equality isn't improving in financial services or elsewhere. Although the proportion of managers at U.S. commercial banks who were Hispanic rose from 4.7% in 2003 to 5.7% in 2014, white women's representation dropped from 39% to 35%, and Black men's from 2.5% to 2.3%. The numbers were even worse in investment banks (though that industry is shrinking, which complicates the analysis). Among all U.S. companies with 100 or more employees, the proportion of Black men in management increased just slightly—from 3% to 3.3%—from 1985 to 2014. White women saw bigger gains from 1985 to 2000—rising from 22% to 29% of managers—but their numbers haven't budged since then. Even in Silicon Valley, where many leaders tout the need to increase diversity for

both business and social justice reasons, bread-and-butter tech jobs remain dominated by white men.

It shouldn't be surprising that most diversity programs aren't increasing diversity. Despite a few new bells and whistles, courtesy of big data, companies are basically doubling down on the same approaches they've used since the 1960s—which often make things worse, not better. Firms have long relied on diversity training to reduce bias on the job, hiring tests and performance ratings to limit it in recruitment and promotions, and grievance systems to give employees a way to challenge managers. Those tools are designed to preempt lawsuits by policing managers' thoughts and actions. Yet laboratory studies show that this kind of force-feeding can activate bias rather than stamp it out. As social scientists have found, people often rebel against rules to assert their autonomy. Try to coerce me to do X, Y, or Z, and I'll do the opposite just to prove that I'm my own person.

In analyzing three decades' worth of data from more than 800 U.S. firms and interviewing hundreds of line managers and executives at length, we've seen that companies get better results when they ease up on the control tactics. It's more effective to engage managers in solving the problem, increase their on-the-job contact with female and minority workers, and promote social accountability—the desire to look fair-minded. That's why interventions such as targeted college recruitment, mentoring programs, self-managed teams, and task forces have boosted diversity in businesses. Some of the most effective solutions aren't even designed with diversity in mind.



Here, we dig into the data, the interviews, and company examples to shed light on what doesn't work and what does.

Why You Can't Just Outlaw Bias

Executives favor a classic command-and-control approach to diversity because it boils expected behaviors down to dos and don'ts that are easy to understand and defend. Yet this approach also flies in the face of nearly everything we know about how to motivate people to make changes. Decades of social science research point to a simple truth: You won't get managers on board by blaming and shaming them with rules and reeducation. Let's look at how the most common top-down efforts typically go wrong.

Diversity training. Do people who undergo training usually shed their biases? Researchers have been examining that question since before World War II, in nearly a thousand studies. It turns out that while people are easily taught to respond correctly to a questionnaire about bias, they soon forget the right answers. The positive effects of diversity training rarely last beyond a day or two, and a number of studies suggest that it can activate bias or spark a backlash. Nonetheless, nearly half of midsize companies use it, as do nearly all the *Fortune* 500.

Many firms see adverse effects. One reason is that three-quarters use negative messages in their training. By headlining the legal case for diversity and trotting out stories of huge settlements, they issue an implied threat: "Discriminate, and the company will pay the price." We understand the temptation—that's how we got your attention in the

first paragraph—but threats, or "negative incentives," don't win converts.

Another reason is that about three-quarters of firms with training still follow the dated advice of the late diversity guru R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr. "If diversity management is strategic to the organization," he used to say, diversity training must be mandatory, and management has to make it clear that "if you can't deal with that, then we have to ask you to leave." But five years after instituting required training for managers, companies saw no improvement in the proportion of white women, Black men, and Hispanics in management, and the share of Black women actually decreased by 9%, on average, while the ranks of Asian American men and women shrank by 4% to 5%. Trainers tell us that people often respond to compulsory courses with anger and resistance—and many participants actually report more animosity toward other groups afterward.

But voluntary training evokes the opposite response ("I chose to show up, so I must be pro-diversity"), leading to better results: increases of 9% to 13% in Black men, Hispanic men, and Asian American men and women in management five years out (with no decline in white or Black women). Research from the University of Toronto reinforces our findings: In one study white subjects read a brochure critiquing prejudice toward Blacks. When people felt pressure to agree with it, the reading strengthened their bias against Blacks. When they felt the choice was theirs, the reading reduced bias.

Companies too often signal that training is remedial. The diversity manager at a national beverage company told us

that the top brass uses it to deal with problem groups. "If there are a number of complaints...or, God forbid, some type of harassment case...leaders say, 'Everyone in the business unit will go through it again.'" Most companies with training have special programs for managers. To be sure, they're a high-risk group because they make the hiring, promotion, and pay decisions. But singling them out implies that they're the worst culprits. Managers tend to resent that implication and resist the message.

Hiring tests. Some 40% of companies now try to fight bias with mandatory hiring tests assessing the skills of candidates for frontline jobs. But managers don't like being told that they can't hire whomever they please, and our research suggests that they often use the tests selectively. Back in the 1950s, following the postwar migration of Blacks northward, Swift & Company, Chicago meatpackers, instituted tests for supervisor and quality-checking jobs. One study found managers telling Blacks that they had failed the test and then promoting whites who hadn't been tested. A Black machine operator reported: "I had four years at Englewood High School. I took an exam for a checker's job. The foreman told me I failed" and gave the job to a white man who "didn't take the exam."

This kind of thing still happens. When we interviewed the new HR director at a West Coast food company, he said he found that white managers were making only strangers—most of them minorities—take supervisor tests and hiring white friends without testing them. "If you are going to test one person for this particular job title," he told us, "you need to test everybody."

■ Managers made only strangers—most of them minorities—take tests and hired white friends without testing them.

But even managers who test everyone applying for a position may ignore the results. Investment banks and consulting firms build tests into their job interviews, asking people to solve math and scenario-based problems on the spot. While studying this practice, Kellogg professor Lauren Rivera played a fly on the wall during hiring meetings at one firm. She found that the team paid little attention when white men blew the math test but close attention when women and Blacks did. Because decision makers (deliberately or not) cherry-picked results, the testing amplified bias rather than quashed it.

Companies that institute written job tests for managers—about 10% have them today—see decreases of 4% to 10% in the share of managerial jobs held by white women, African American men and women, Hispanic men and women, and Asian American women over the next five years. There are significant declines among white and Asian American women—groups with high levels of education, which typically score well on standard managerial tests. So group differences in test-taking skills don't explain the pattern.

Performance ratings. More than 90% of midsize and large companies use annual performance ratings to ensure that managers make fair pay and promotion decisions. Identifying and rewarding the best workers isn't the only goal—the ratings also provide a litigation shield. Companies sued for discrimination often claim that their performance rating systems prevent biased treatment.

But studies show that raters tend to lowball women and minorities in performance reviews. And some managers give

everyone high marks to avoid hassles with employees or to keep their options open when handing out promotions. However managers work around performance systems, the bottom line is that ratings don't boost diversity. When companies introduce them, there's no effect on minority managers over the next five years, and the share of white women in management drops by 4%, on average.

Grievance procedures. This last tactic is meant to identify and rehabilitate biased managers. About half of midsize and large firms have systems through which employees can challenge pay, promotion, and termination decisions. But many managers—rather than change their own behavior or address discrimination by others—try to get even with or belittle employees who complain. Among the nearly 90,000 discrimination complaints made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2015, 45% included a charge of retaliation—which suggests that the original report was met with ridicule, demotion, or worse.

Once people see that a grievance system isn't warding off bad behavior in their organization, they may become less likely to speak up. Indeed, employee surveys show that most people don't report discrimination. This leads to another unintended consequence: Managers who receive few complaints conclude that their firms don't have a problem. We see this a lot in our interviews. When we talked with the vice president of HR at an electronics firm, she mentioned the widely publicized “difficulties other corporations are having” and added, “We have not had any of those problems... we have gone almost four years without



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

To reduce bias and increase diversity, organizations are relying on the same programs they've been using since the 1960s. Some of these efforts make matters worse, not better.

THE REASON

Most diversity programs focus on controlling managers' behavior, and as studies show, that approach tends to activate bias rather than quash it. People rebel against rules that threaten their autonomy.

THE SOLUTION

Instead of trying to police managers' decisions, the most effective programs engage people in working for diversity, increase their contact with women and minorities, and tap into their desire to look good to others.

any kind of discrimination complaint!” What's more, lab studies show that protective measures like grievance systems lead people to drop their guard and let bias affect their decisions, because they think company policies will guarantee fairness.

Things don't get better when firms put in formal grievance systems; they get

The Downside of the Diversity Label

Why can mentoring, self-managed teams, and cross-training increase diversity without the backlash prompted by mandatory training? One reason may be that these programs aren't usually branded as diversity efforts. Diversity language in company policy can stress white men out, as researchers at UC Santa Barbara and the University of Washington found when they put young white men through a simulated job interview—half of them for a company that touted its commitment to diversity, and half for a company that did not. In the explicitly pro-diversity company, subjects expected discrimination against whites, showed cardiovascular distress, and did markedly worse in the taped interview.

worse. Our quantitative analyses show that the managerial ranks of white women and all minority groups except Hispanic men decline—by 3% to 11%—in the five years after companies adopt them.

Still, most employers feel they need some sort of system to intercept complaints, if only because judges like them. One strategy that is gaining ground is the “flexible” complaint system, which offers not only a formal hearing process but also informal mediation. Since an informal resolution doesn't involve hauling the manager before a disciplinary body, it may reduce retaliation. As we'll show, making managers feel accountable without subjecting them to public rebuke tends to help.

Tools for Getting Managers on Board

If these popular solutions backfire, then what can employers do instead to promote diversity?

A number of companies have gotten consistently positive results with tactics that don't focus on control. They apply three basic principles: engage managers in solving the problem, expose them to people from different groups, and encourage social accountability for change.

Engagement. When someone's beliefs and behavior are out of sync, that person experiences what psychologists call “cognitive dissonance.” Experiments show that people have a strong tendency to “correct” dissonance by changing either the beliefs or the behavior. So, if you prompt them to act in ways that support a particular view, their opinions shift toward that view. Ask them to write an essay defending the death penalty, and even the penalty's staunch opponents will come to see some merits. When managers actively help boost diversity in their companies, something similar happens: They begin to think of themselves as diversity champions.

Take *college recruitment programs* targeting women and minorities. Our interviews suggest that managers willingly participate when invited. That's partly because the message is positive: “Help us find a greater variety of promising employees!” And involvement is voluntary: Executives sometimes single out managers they think would be good recruiters, but they don't drag anyone along at gunpoint.

Managers who make college visits say they take their charge seriously. They are determined to come back with strong candidates from underrepresented groups—female engineers, for instance, or African American management trainees. Cognitive dissonance soon kicks in—

and managers who were wishy-washy about diversity become converts.

The effects are striking. Five years after a company implements a college recruitment program targeting female employees, the share of white women, Black women, Hispanic women, and Asian American women in its management rises by about 10%, on average. A program focused on minority recruitment increases the proportion of Black male managers by 8% and Black female managers by 9%.

Mentoring is another way to engage managers and chip away at their biases. In teaching their protégés the ropes and sponsoring them for key training and assignments, mentors help give their charges the breaks they need to develop and advance. The mentors then come to believe that their protégés merit these opportunities—whether they're white men, women, or minorities. That is cognitive dissonance—“Anyone I sponsor must be deserving”—at work again.

While white men tend to find mentors on their own, women and minorities more often need help from formal programs. One reason, as Georgetown's business school dean David Thomas discovered in his research on mentoring, is that white male executives don't feel comfortable reaching out informally to young women and minority men. Yet they are eager to mentor assigned protégés, and women and minorities are often first to sign up for mentors.

Mentoring programs make companies' managerial echelons significantly more diverse: On average they boost the representation of Black, Hispanic, and Asian American women, and Hispanic and Asian American men, by 9% to 24%.

In industries where plenty of college-educated nonmanagers are eligible to move up, like chemicals and electronics, mentoring programs also increase the ranks of white women and Black men by 10% or more.

Only about 15% of firms have special college recruitment programs for women and minorities, and only 10% have mentoring programs. Once organizations try them out, though, the upside becomes clear. Consider how these programs helped Coca-Cola in the wake of a race discrimination suit settled in 2000 for a record \$193 million. With guidance from a court-appointed external task force, executives in the North America group got involved in recruitment and mentoring initiatives for professionals and middle managers, working specifically toward measurable goals for minorities. Even top leaders helped to recruit and mentor, and talent-sourcing partners were required to broaden their recruitment efforts. After five years, according to former CEO and chairman Neville Isdell, 80% of all mentees had climbed at least one rung in management. Both individual and group mentoring were open to all races but attracted large numbers of African Americans (who accounted for 36% of protégés). These changes brought important gains. From 2000 to 2006, African Americans’ representation among salaried employees grew from 19.7% to 23%, and Hispanics’ from 5.5% to 6.4%. And while African Americans and Hispanics respectively made up 12% and 4.9% of professionals and middle managers in 2002, just four years later those figures had risen to 15.5% and 5.9%. This began a virtuous cycle. Today, Coke looks like a different company.

Poor Returns on the Usual Diversity Programs

The three most popular interventions make firms less diverse, not more, because managers resist strong-arming. For instance, testing job applicants hurts women and minorities—but not because they perform poorly. Hiring managers don’t always test everyone (white men often get a pass) and don’t interpret results consistently.

% change over five years in representation among managers

Type of program	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Mandatory diversity training				−9.2			−4.5	−5.4
Job tests		−3.8	−10.2	−9.1	−6.7	−8.8		−9.3
Grievance systems		−2.7	−7.3	−4.8		−4.7	−11.3	−4.1

Diversity Programs That Get Results

Companies do a better job of increasing diversity when they forgo the control tactics and frame their efforts more positively. The most effective programs spark engagement, increase contact among different groups, or draw on people’s strong desire to look good to others.

% change over five years in representation among managers

Type of program	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Voluntary training			+13.3		+9.1		+9.3	+12.6
Self-managed teams	−2.8	+5.6	+3.4	+3.9				+3.6
Cross-training	−1.4	+3.0	+2.7	+3.0	−3.9		+6.5	+4.1
College recruitment: women*	−2.0	+10.2	+7.9	+8.7		+10.0	+18.3	+8.6
College recruitment: minorities**			+7.7	+8.9				
Mentoring				+18.0	+9.1	+23.7	+18.0	+24.0
Diversity task forces	−3.3	+11.6	+8.7	+22.7	+12.0	+16.2	+30.2	+24.2
Diversity managers		+7.5	+17.0	+11.1		+18.2	+10.9	+13.6

*College recruitment targeting women turns recruiting managers into diversity champions, so it also helps boost the numbers for Black and Asian American men.

**College recruitment targeting minorities often focuses on historically Black schools, which lifts the numbers of African American men and women.

Note: Gray indicates no statistical certainty of a program's effect.

Source: Authors' study of 829 midsize and large U.S. firms. The analysis isolated the effects of diversity programs from everything else going on in the companies and in the economy.

■ ■ Once it was clear that top managers were watching, women started to get more premier assignments.

This February, *Atlanta Tribune* magazine profiled 17 African American women in VP roles and above at Coke, including CFO Kathy Waller.

Contact. Evidence that contact between groups can lessen bias first came to light in an unplanned experiment on the European front during World War II. The U.S. army was still segregated, and only whites served in combat roles. High casualties left General Dwight Eisenhower understaffed, and he asked for Black volunteers for combat duty. When Harvard sociologist Samuel Stouffer, on leave at the War Department, surveyed troops on their racial attitudes, he found that whites whose companies had been joined by Black platoons showed dramatically lower racial animus and greater willingness to work alongside Blacks than those whose companies remained segregated. Stouffer concluded that whites fighting alongside Blacks came to see them as soldiers like themselves first and foremost. The key, for Stouffer, was that whites and Blacks had to be working toward a common goal *as equals*—hundreds of years of close contact during and after slavery hadn't dampened bias.

Business practices that generate this kind of contact across groups yield similar results. Take *self-managed teams*, which allow people in different roles and functions to work together on projects as equals. Such teams increase contact among diverse types of people, because specialties within firms are still largely divided along racial, ethnic, and gender lines. For example, women are more likely than men to work in sales, whereas white men are more likely to be in tech jobs and management, and Black and

Hispanic men are more likely to be in production.

As in Stouffer's combat study, working side-by-side breaks down stereotypes, which leads to more equitable hiring and promotion. At firms that create self-managed work teams, the share of white women, Black men and women, and Asian American women in management rises by 3% to 6% over five years.

Rotating management trainees through departments is another way to increase contact. Typically, this kind of *cross-training* allows people to try their hand at various jobs and deepen their understanding of the whole organization. But it also has a positive impact on diversity, because it exposes both department heads and trainees to a wider variety of people. The result, we've seen, is a bump of 3% to 7% in white women, Black men and women, and Asian American men and women in management.

About a third of U.S. firms have self-managed teams for core operations, and nearly four-fifths use cross-training, so these tools are already available in many organizations. Though college recruitment and mentoring have a bigger impact on diversity—perhaps because they activate engagement in the diversity mission *and* create intergroup contact—every bit helps. Self-managed teams and cross-training have had more positive effects than mandatory diversity training, performance evaluations, job testing, or grievance procedures, which are supposed to promote diversity.

Social accountability. The third tactic, encouraging social accountability, plays on our need to look good in the eyes of those around us. It is nicely illus-

trated by an experiment conducted in Israel. Teachers in training graded identical compositions attributed to Jewish students with Ashkenazic names (European heritage) or with Sephardic names (African or Asian heritage). Sephardic students typically come from poorer families and do worse in school. On average, the teacher trainees gave the Ashkenazic essays Bs and the Sephardic essays Ds. The difference evaporated, however, when trainees were told that they would discuss their grades with peers. The idea that they might have to explain their decisions led them to judge the work by its quality.

In the workplace you'll see a similar effect. Consider this field study conducted by Emilio Castilla of MIT's Sloan School of Management: A firm found it consistently gave African Americans smaller raises than whites, even when they had identical job titles and performance ratings. So Castilla suggested transparency to activate social accountability. The firm posted each unit's average performance rating and pay raise by race and gender. Once managers realized that employees, peers, and superiors would know which parts of the company favored whites, the gap in raises all but disappeared.

Corporate *diversity task forces* help promote social accountability. CEOs usually assemble these teams, inviting department heads to volunteer and including members of underrepresented groups. Every quarter or two, task forces look at diversity numbers for the whole company, for business units, and for departments to figure out what needs attention.

After investigating where the problems are—recruitment, career bottle-



necks, and so on—task force members come up with solutions, which they then take back to their departments. They notice if their colleagues aren't volunteering to mentor or showing up at recruitment events. Accountability theory suggests that having a task force member in a department will cause managers in it to ask themselves, "Will this look right?" when making hiring and promotion decisions.

Deloitte has seen how powerful social accountability can be. In 1992, Mike Cook, who was then the CEO, decided to try to stanch the hemorrhaging of female associates. Half the company's hires were women, but nearly all of them left before they were anywhere near making partner. As Douglas McCracken, CEO of Deloitte's consulting unit at the time, later recounted in HBR, Cook assembled a high-profile task force that "didn't immediately launch a slew of new organizational policies aimed at outlawing bad behavior" but, rather, relied on transparency to get results.

The task force got each office to monitor the career progress of its women and set its own goals to address local problems. When it became clear that the CEO and other managing partners were closely watching, McCracken wrote, "women started getting their share of premier client assignments and informal mentoring." And unit heads all over the country began getting questions from partners and associates about why things weren't changing faster. An external advisory council issued annual progress reports, and individual managers chose change metrics to add to their own performance ratings. In eight years turnover among women dropped to the same

level as turnover among men, and the proportion of female partners increased from 5% to 14%—the highest percentage among the big accounting firms. By 2015, 21% of Deloitte's global partners were women, and in March of that year, Deloitte LLP appointed Cathy Engelbert as its CEO—making her the first woman to head a major accountancy.

Task forces are the trifecta of diversity programs. In addition to promoting accountability, they engage members who might have previously been cool to diversity projects and increase contact among the women, minorities, and white men who participate. They pay off, too: On average, companies that put in diversity task forces see 9% to 30% increases in the representation of white women and of each minority group in management over the next five years.

Diversity managers, too, boost inclusion by creating social accountability. To see why, let's go back to the finding of the teacher-in-training experiment, which is supported by many studies: When people know they *might* have to explain their decisions, they are less likely to act on bias. So simply having a diversity manager who could ask them questions prompts managers to step back and consider everyone who is qualified instead of hiring or promoting the first people who come to mind. Companies that appoint diversity managers see 7% to 18% increases in all underrepresented groups—except Hispanic men—in management in the following five years. Those are the gains after accounting for both effective and ineffective programs they put in place.

Only 20% of medium and large employers have task forces, and just 10% have diversity managers, despite the benefits of

both. Diversity managers cost money, but task forces use existing workers, so they're a lot cheaper than some of the things that fail, such as mandatory training.

Leading companies like Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Facebook, and Google have placed big bets on accountability in the past couple of years. Expanding on Deloitte's early example, they're now posting complete diversity numbers for all to see. We should know in a few years if that moves the needle for them.

STRATEGIES FOR CONTROLLING bias—which drive most diversity efforts—have failed spectacularly since they were introduced to promote equal opportunity. Black men have barely gained ground in corporate management since 1985. White women haven't progressed since 2000. It isn't that there aren't enough educated women and minorities out there—both groups have made huge educational gains over the past two generations. The problem is that we can't motivate people by forcing them to get with the program and punishing them if they don't.

The numbers sum it up. Your organization will become less diverse, not more, if you require managers to go to diversity training, try to regulate their hiring and promotion decisions, and put in a legalistic grievance system.

The very good news is that we know what does work—we just need to do more of it. ☺

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DIVERSIFY YOUR ORGANIZATION

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The Other Diversity Dividend

We know that varied teams make better decisions. A new study shows they also make better investments.

→ by PAUL GOMPERS and SILPA KOVVALI

WHEN MANAGERS AND SCHOLARS talk about diversity's impact on organizations and teams, they're usually referring to the effects on collective accuracy and objectivity, analytical thinking, and innovativeness. On "harder" measures of financial performance, researchers have struggled to establish a causal relationship with diversity—particularly when studying large companies, where decision rights and incentives can be murky, and the effects of any given choice on, say, profits or market share can be nearly impossible to pin down.

So we've zeroed in on diversity's effects in the venture capital industry, which presents fewer barriers to understanding. VC firms are fairly flat in structure, composed primarily of

investment partners and relatively few junior professionals. Every investor is a decision maker, and choices have clear business consequences. We know which firms make what investments, and for the most part we can identify the individuals leading those investments, because they usually take seats on the boards of portfolio companies. Using publicly available information, we can analyze VC professionals' "endowed traits," such as gender and ethnicity, and "acquired traits," such as schooling and work history. In other words, we can see how similar or different these decision makers are and compare the quality of their decisions on the basis of their investments' performance. Because their incentives are aligned and readily







discernible—compensation for VCs is largely determined by profit sharing, ensuring that they and their investment partners have the same goals—the analysis is not clouded by inscrutable interests. The goal of every venture capital investor and firm is to choose and groom the companies that will yield the best possible outcomes.

All in all, we couldn't have asked for a better “lab rat” than the VC world. Over the past several years one of us (Paul Gompers) has examined the decisions of thousands of venture capitalists and tens of thousands of investments, and the evidence is clear: Diversity significantly improves financial performance on measures such as profitable investments at the individual portfolio-company level and overall fund returns. And even though the desire to associate with similar people—a tendency academics call homophily—can bring social benefits to those who exhibit it, including a sense of shared culture and belonging, it can also lead investors and firms to leave a lot of money on the table.

In this article we'll describe the research behind those findings and provide recommendations for reaping the business benefits of diversity. Decision makers fare best when they openly acknowledge and address homophily early on, understand that small adjustments in mindset and behavior can have lasting ripple effects, and diversify their personal as well as professional networks.

The Impact on Business Results

The gender and racial makeup of the venture capital industry is staggeringly

homogeneous. A comprehensive data set of every VC organization and investor in the United States since 1990 shows that the industry has remained relatively uniform for the past 28 years. Only 8% of the investors are women. Racial minorities are also underrepresented—about 2% of VC investors are Hispanic, and fewer than 1% are Black. Those groups have seen significantly increased representation in other fields and in advanced professional and scientific degree programs, but not in the VC industry. It's against that backdrop that venture capitalists choose their collaborators at other firms, investing their money side by side and joining the boards that guide the start-ups. Most investors specialize in a particular industry or sector, so potential partners are easy for researchers like us to identify: They are investing in the same types of deals at around the same time. And venture capitalists are far more likely to partner with people if they share their gender or race. They're also significantly more likely to collaborate with people if they share their educational background or a previous employer. Belonging to the same racial group increases the propensity to work together by 39.2%, and having a degree from the same school increases it by 34.4%. Not only is the likelihood of collaborating on any one deal greater, but VCs tend to keep teaming up with those who share their traits.

What does all that mean for performance? How do the financial outcomes of homogeneous partnerships compare with those of diverse collaborations? The difference is dramatic. Along all dimensions measured, the more similar the investment partners, the lower their

investments' performance. For example, the success rate of acquisitions and IPOs was 11.5% lower, on average, for investments by partners with shared school backgrounds than for those by partners from different schools. The effect of shared ethnicity was even stronger, reducing an investment's comparative success rate by 26.4% to 32.2%.

To understand why homogeneous teams have worse investment outcomes, it's critical to determine exactly when decision making suffers. Interestingly, projects selected by both homogeneous and diverse sets of investment partners were equally promising at the time the decision to invest was made. Differences in decision quality and performance came later, when the investors helped shape strategy, recruitment, and other efforts critical to a young company's survival and growth. Thriving in a highly uncertain competitive environment requires creative thinking in those areas, and the diverse collaborators were better equipped to deliver it.

Of course, the industry's homogeneity is continually reinforced by individual firms' hiring decisions. Because these organizations are small (they usually have three to five investment professionals), and spots open up infrequently (every two to four years), even a slight preference for candidates who are similar to existing partners has a lasting effect. Here's just one example: Many prominent venture capital firms were founded by Harvard Business School alumni, and now nearly a quarter of all VCs with MBAs come from Harvard. To put that into perspective, only 9% of VCs with MBAs are from Wharton, and just 11% are from Stanford—both top-tier schools.

■ It's far easier to build a diverse organization from the ground up than to diversify a large, complex machine.

Prospects are even worse for female candidates. Remember that only 8% of venture capital investors are women. It's no wonder, since nearly three-quarters of VC firms have never hired a woman in that role. What separates that overwhelming majority from the firms that have hired women? One powerful factor is the gender of the partners' children. When a firm's partners have a higher proportion of daughters, the likelihood that a female investor will be hired goes up significantly. Simply replacing one son with a daughter would increase the probability of hiring a woman by 25%.

Of course, we aren't suggesting that male VCs should have daughters to reduce gender bias and increase diversity in their firms. But because the gender of one's child isn't a choice, the finding offers a tighter lens on diversity's effects. When the "daughter effect" does bring more women into the fold, it has a strong impact on performance. Venture capital firms that increased their proportion of female partner hires by 10% saw, on average, a 1.5% spike in overall fund returns each year and had 9.7% more profitable exits (an impressive figure given that only 28.8% of all VC investments have a profitable exit).

The economic impact of diversity isn't limited to the VC world. A recent NBER analysis of highly skilled occupations (in fields such as law, medicine, science, academia, and management) shows a positive relationship between diversity and the value of goods and services produced in the United States. The study looks at GDP trends beginning in 1960, when significant barriers prevented white women, Black women, and Black men from entering those professions. Though

we're still nowhere near parity, gender and racial diversity have increased markedly in such fields over the past 50 years—and the U.S. economy has grown in that same period. Using a model that assumes innate skills are evenly distributed across gender and racial groups, the NBER analysis attributes about 25% of the GDP growth per capita to the uptick in white women and Black Americans of both genders. In short, the authors argue, the United States began making better use of the talent at its disposal.

Reaping Diversity's Benefits

Given that homogeneity imposes financial costs and diversity produces financial gains, a natural next step is to assess what managers can do to increase representation across groups. Here are some evidence-based recommendations:

Start early. Timing is a crucial and often overlooked factor. Founders and entrepreneurs in particular may place diversity low on their list of early priorities, viewing it as a concern that can be addressed once their firms have grown. But it is far easier to build a diverse organization from the ground up than to diversify a large, complex, homogeneous machine.

Stacy Brown-Philpot, the CEO of the freelance-job site TaskRabbit, made that point when she reflected on her early days as a financial director at Google. "When I joined Google, it was 1,000 people," she said. "It took me two and a half years to look around and realize there weren't a lot of people like me. So [my colleague] David Drummond and I... put together a group. It was really late. I think that's part of the challenge [at



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

Researchers have struggled to establish a causal relationship between diversity and financial performance—particularly in large companies, where decision rights and incentives can be murky.

THE RESEARCH

The authors zeroed in on the venture capital industry, which presents fewer barriers to understanding: Every investor is a decision maker, and choices have clear business consequences. Incentives are aligned and readily discernible.

THE FINDINGS

The evidence is clear: Diversity significantly improves VCs' financial performance on measures such as profitable investments at the individual portfolio-company level and overall fund returns. The authors provide recommendations for reaping its business benefits.

Google]." When Brown-Philpot moved to TaskRabbit, she took a different tack with the young company, partnering with the Congressional Black Caucus's CBC TECH 2020 initiative to bring more Black workers into the tech industry. In 2016 Brown-Philpot publicly com-

■ When people choose to ignore bias or deny that it exists, they miss out on the quantifiable benefits of diversity.

mitted to increasing TaskRabbit's Black workforce from 11% to 13% of employees by the year's end, to ensure proportional Black representation at the company.

Sociology scholarship underscores the flaws in a delayed approach. In one study researchers used e-mail as a proxy for social connections at a university. They discovered that over multiple "generations" of interaction, such as taking new classes or joining new activities, even minor individual tendencies to interact with similar people could have a large cumulative effect, resulting in striking levels of group homogeneity. The result suggests that an already homogeneous organization will tend to become even more so as it scales up. So it's important to encode diversity in a company's DNA at the earliest stages.

This is not to say, of course, that it's impossible to improve diversity in an established company. Standardized processes, such as blinding résumés during hiring and using objective metrics during performance reviews (as long as they're constantly refined through iterative development), can have a big impact in organizations looking to ameliorate bias. But when the teams developing and refining those processes are themselves unrepresentative of the broader universe of candidates, they must take special care to ensure that they aren't institutionalizing their individual biases.

Recognize that subtle, intentional shifts can have ripple effects. This is true not just in venture capital and entrepreneurship but in any setting where small groups of people wield outsize decision-making authority. Bringing just a few talented women or racial minori-

ties into a group like that changes the relative balance of power. And recent findings suggest that if those individuals make hiring decisions, they will affect the group's future makeup. In an online simulation, participants were placed in "employer" and "potential hire" buckets. Choosing between one woman and one man, female employers hired the woman 50% of the time, while men hired her only 40% of the time.

That might be interpreted as evidence of affinity, suggesting that the homophilic biases that can hamper diversity when exhibited by overrepresented groups can bolster it when exhibited by underrepresented ones. Or the results might suggest that people who have been historically disadvantaged in recruiting are less likely to discriminate against those who share their endowed traits. Both explanations are probably true to some extent. But one of us (Gompers) actually found in a recent study that members of traditionally underrepresented groups were more likely than white men to seek out people unlike themselves when forming entrepreneurial teams. That result implies that qualified members of dominant groups aren't in much danger of being locked out of diverse organizations. Combined with the fact that group homophily tends to compound over time, it also suggests that if the goal is proportional representation over the long term, it's better to overcorrect for bias early on, by hiring more people from traditionally underrepresented groups, than it is to undercorrect.

To accomplish that, companies need not explicitly favor a particular race or gender when hiring. Sometimes simple adjustments in the selection process can increase diversity. In one study led by

the behavioral economist Iris Bohnet, of Harvard Kennedy School, students were assigned the role of an employer asked to select an employee who would do well on a future math or verbal task. Even though gender was not predictive of performance, "employers" evaluating individual candidates were likely to be swayed by stereotypes, exhibiting a preference for women on verbal tasks and men on math tasks. But when they assessed two candidates side by side, gender suddenly became irrelevant. Evaluators instead focused on past performance—an actual indicator of future success.

We've seen similar results in blind evaluations of prospective hires. Most of us have heard that auditioning musicians behind screens has dramatically increased the percentage of women who make the cut for symphony orchestras. Here's an example from another industry: When the political satire show *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* was gearing up to hire writers, then-showrunner Jo Miller combined other shows' evaluation processes, making minor tweaks consistent with her goals. In a first-round call for script submissions, detailed formatting instructions were included so that superficial indicators of experience would not overshadow talent, taste, and potential. Those scripts were evaluated blindly, and an unusually large number of applicants made it to a second round, in which previous work and other factors, including gender and ethnicity, were considered. The result was a strikingly diverse team for late-night comedy: 50% women and 30% people of color.

Though these were basic process adjustments, another important ingredient is intention. Both Miller and Bee felt that



a diverse writers' room was a priority for the show, given its subject matter and irreverence. The hiring process was deliberately designed to support that goal. But that's not the case in most organizations.

Consider the typical newsroom. The American Society of News Editors' 2017 Newsroom Employment Diversity Survey found that almost every major newspaper in the nation, from the *New York Times* to the *Boston Globe* to the *Washington Post*, is whiter than its audience city. When the *New York Times Magazine* reporter and 2017 MacArthur fellow Nikole Hannah-Jones was asked to offer advice to journalists of color in light of the troubling report, she instead issued a call to newsroom managers to examine whether "their stated goals are really their goals." She added: "If newsroom managers wanted diverse newsrooms, they'd have diverse newsrooms."

Other prominent figures in the media shared this assessment. The *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow reflected in a recent tweet, "As a newsroom manager from age 25 to 37, [I] was always struck by how the 'soft skills' [people] favored were in many ways culturally exclusive." The broadcast journalist and producer Soledad O'Brien passionately concurred. "It is not brain surgery," she noted.

Diversify beyond the workplace. Because social and professional circles often overlap, homogeneous personal networks can have a deleterious effect on organizational diversity. That's why some companies have deemphasized referrals, or at least cautioned against their pitfalls. But reliance on personal networking is still crucial to the functioning of certain industries. A survey of venture capital-

ists, for example, showed that social connections are essential to generating deal flow. But investors' personal networks tend to be closed, given that most VCs have the same educational background, are the same gender and race, and have worked at similar firms. Consequently, they can miss a lot of opportunities.

Though assigned mentorship and other professional programs can help decrease bias and increase diversity in organizations by exposing managers and employees to more people who are less like them, such relationships are by nature hierarchical and may actually aggravate individuals' prejudices. In one study, when white participants were assigned the role of "superior" over a Black subordinate, their racial bias increased. Situational power in same-race pairs had no impact on racial attitudes.

At the individual level, extensive social contact on an equal footing is a better strategy for lessening bias. One representative study demonstrated that friendships with homosexual individuals were effective in reducing sexual prejudice. Another study found that white participants' friendships with Latinos or African Americans reduced their implicit biases toward those groups.

The most generous interpretation of homophilic tendencies is that they arise from a seemingly innocuous desire to interact with people like ourselves. But the analysis of entrepreneurial team formation mentioned earlier revealed that endowed traits had a stronger homophilic "pull" than acquired traits. Social interactions can compel people to reevaluate what it means for someone to be "like them," beyond such easily discernible demographic indicators. The benefits

of these interactions carry over to the workplace, where expanded networks and mindsets can improve both individual and organizational performance.

A willingness to openly recognize and tackle bias is at the heart of all our recommendations. When people choose to ignore bias or deny that it exists, they keep seeking out business partners, team members, and employees who share their traits, and they miss out on the quantifiable benefits of diversity.

Social science research suggests that people tend to react with anger and irritation when confronted about their biases—particularly when those biases are accurately labeled as such. Although such interactions may be unpleasant, they also tend to lead to behavioral change, and so should be welcomed as opportunities for growth. Bias is a measurable condition, but it is not a permanent one, on either the individual or the organizational level. By acknowledging it we can counter it, expanding our pool of potential collaborators and improving financial performance. ©

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Diversity and Authenticity

Minorities hesitate to share information about themselves at work. That's a problem for everyone.

→ by KATHERINE W. PHILLIPS, TRACY L. DUMAS, and NANCY P. ROTHBARD

WHEN MARCUS (not his real name) joined a leading international bank right out of college, he believed that success would come from delivering solid numbers. “Secure the highest returns, bring in the most clients, keep your head down, and get the work done,” he says, recalling his strategy. For years Marcus did just that, receiving awards for his exemplary work on complex deals. But despite earning the best performance ratings in his group, he kept getting passed over for promotion. One day he worked up the nerve to ask his boss why. “You are really good at your job, but the problem is that the partners feel they don’t really know you,” his manager told him. Marcus ac-

knowledged the criticism. “I was afraid to open up,” he says. So he worked to overcome that fear. He began seeking out lunches and other social opportunities with partners and finding common areas of interest, such as children, college sports, fantasy sports, and new restaurants. He began talking more openly about his life outside the office—a key to building relationships. “Once I did that, things started to turn around,” he says. Today Marcus is a managing partner.

Nothing in that series of events makes it obvious that Marcus is African American. He is, and in our experience (backed up by our research), his ethnicity played a role in his discomfort with “opening



up” at work. Just like Marcus, many other minority members fail to understand that their career mobility can be affected by their colleagues’ feelings of familiarity or closeness with them. And even for those who do understand this, building workplace relationships across racial boundaries can be difficult. Given the obstacles minorities face in navigating a corporate culture, this may seem minor. It is not. Opening yourself to others requires risk taking and trust, but without it employees are less likely to build the deeper relationships that lead both to success and to more happiness at work. Our research focuses on African Americans, but this dynamic applies to the acclimation and professional trajectories of all those who find themselves in the minority at work, including working mothers, older employees at youth-oriented start-ups, and people whose conservative political views make them feel like outliers in organizations dominated by liberals or progressives.

Decades’ worth of studies have shown that similarity attracts—a phenomenon known as homophily. Our research focuses on a specific aspect of this: That being one’s true self, disclosing elements of one’s personal life, and forming social connections are easier within one’s own group than they are across a demographic boundary such as racial background. This is crucial to keep in mind as companies aspire to become more diverse. Simply hiring members of a minority group won’t ensure that they feel comfortable or equipped to build the relationships necessary for advancement. And as companies invest in mentorship and sponsorship programs, making these relationships

flourish among workers of differing races may require special effort.

Social Events Can Create a Strain

Out-of-the-office social events are an important venue for building relationships with colleagues. We surveyed more than 300 employees from many racial backgrounds—half of them employed full-time in a wide variety of industries, half of them MBA students—about their participation in such events. They reported engaging in three distinct kinds of work-related social activities: (1) official company events, such as holiday parties, company picnics, outings to sports events, and so forth, which are typically organized by the HR department and open to all employees; (2) informal get-togethers orchestrated by small groups of staffers, such as happy-hour drinks, baby showers, and lunches; (3) professional development activities, such as community service events, team-building retreats, and skill-building seminars. Among the three kinds, ad hoc drinks after work were by far the most common.

The problem is not that minorities fail to show up for such outings. In fact, our research reveals that their attendance rates are similar to those of other demographic groups. However, in our surveys, minorities are more likely than others to report attending out of a sense of obligation or a fear of negative career consequences if they don’t appear. Prior research has shown that this socializing can make people feel closer, and our studies confirmed that—with one important difference: Regardless of

race, people who would prefer to skip such events typically come away feeling no more connected to colleagues than when they walked in the door.

One reason these gatherings fail to help minorities bond with coworkers is the difficulty people have making small talk across racial lines. “What am I supposed to say in these social networking settings?” one Black female executive asked. “How do I jump into the conversation when I often have no idea what they are talking about? I don’t watch the same TV shows or the sports they are discussing.” When the conversation turns to workplace gossip, minority employees say, they may hold back because they lack the trusting relationships necessary to participate in exchanges that involve discreet backbiting or criticism of bosses. As one Black executive put it, “I don’t feel safe sharing information that might later be used against me.” Because making conversation at these events can be challenging, many minorities we interviewed said they intentionally arrive late and leave early—they put in an appearance, but no more.

In a second set of studies aimed at understanding the obstacles to self-disclosure, we surveyed more than 300 young African American, Hispanic, and other racial-minority professionals who were seeking admittance to an elite MBA program. Asked how likely they would be to disclose personal information to either a white or an African American coworker at a company social event, these highly educated people reported that they’d be more uncomfortable opening up to a white coworker than to a Black one, especially if they felt their work performance was average (as opposed

■ ■ “I don’t feel safe sharing information that might later be used against me.”

to high). Their responses reflected fear that personal information highlighting their race (termed *status-confirming disclosure*) might reinforce the stereotypes that can undermine performance reviews and prevent progress toward leadership roles.

Consider a woman we’ll call Karen, a well-educated professional working in higher education, who recalls a conversation at a birthday party her colleagues threw for her. A white coworker asked, “What did you do for your birthday?” Karen replied, “I went to a concert with my husband and some friends.” The coworker asked the logical follow-up question: “Who did you see?” Karen had seen Kirk Franklin, an African American gospel artist who’s quite popular among her Black friends. She assumed the colleague wouldn’t be familiar with Franklin, so she mumbled, “You won’t know him” and pivoted to a new topic. This may sound like an innocuous exchange, but years later Karen remembers it as significant: “If I am not comfortable with who I am, the music I like, the places I like to go, how can I expect my coworker to value me for who I am? What is so wrong with being excited about Kirk Franklin?”

Strategies to Reduce the Stress

Organizations that hope to increase diversity and promote the careers of racial minorities can benefit from being aware of these challenges—and taking steps to make employees from varied demographic groups feel comfortable engaging with one another. So how can we ensure that racial minorities and majority members do feel that way—both socially and

professionally? Our research focuses on understanding the various dimensions of this problem. Drawing on the research of others, we suggest several strategies that may help.

Structure. First, recognize the role that structure can play in easing the discomfort created by free-form socializing. Instead of the typical cocktail party, where some people (of any race) struggle to navigate the room, introduce themselves, and choose how, when, and with whom to initiate and exit conversations, consider a different approach. Some companies use formal ice-breaker games that create orderliness and purpose, reducing that need to navigate—just as structured speed-dating events can make it less stressful to meet many people quickly. If the gathering is small, have a leader introduce everyone, focusing on the unique talents each brings to the group. In a larger setting, forming teams or introducing a competitive element may create a more pleasant experience, not just for minorities but for everyone who finds it challenging to mingle with people he or she doesn’t know very well. Remember that no matter how diverse the work group, all its members have one thing in common: the work. That means events that celebrate a win or otherwise highlight the collective work itself will help group members relate more easily.

This same sense of structure and roles can be useful back at the office, when managers meet to discuss individuals’ performance. Consider the benefits of appointing someone to keep an eye out for subjective comments that refer to social rather than work performance. Recognize that the best performance conversations are specific and descriptive and



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

Building workplace relationships across racial boundaries can be difficult. Being one’s true self, disclosing elements of one’s personal life, and forming social connections are easier within one’s own group than they are across a demographic boundary. But employees who hesitate to open up are less likely to build the deeper relationships that lead both to success and to more happiness at work.

THE SOLUTION

Organizations that recognize this challenge can take specific steps to make it easier. Creating structure in social events (such as icebreaker games) may reduce the anxiety associated with free-form small talk. Leaders can model a learning mindset, whereby differences between people create an opportunity to hear something new. And mentorship can be especially helpful to minorities, who may feel marginalized within the organization.



focus on work-related actions and behaviors. When remarks stray toward the personal or the vague, they are often coded and loaded with cultural assumptions. (Comments such as “Marcus just doesn’t fit in” and “We feel like we don’t know him” are good examples.) To be sure, specific, business-oriented criticisms of social behavior may be valid, but often these catchall comments are off base and a way of penalizing someone who avoids the Thursday happy hour because he or she feels different from the majority. Designating someone in advance to throw the flag on such remarks can keep management discussions focused on the most relevant performance dimensions.

Learning. Pay attention to diversity research showing the advantages of adopting a learning orientation: Organizations and individuals benefit when exposed to differences. Although this orientation is typically established at the organizational level—modeled and reinforced by leaders—individuals can speak and act in ways that mirror it. For instance, instead of asking, “Did you watch *Modern Family* last night?”—which puts someone with a different taste in television at an immediate disadvantage—try a gambit like this: “I can’t find anything I like on TV right now, and I want to try some new shows. What are you watching that you really enjoy?” This legitimizes everyone’s choices and reduces the feeling that people may be judged on their answers, or that certain parts of the culture should be universal. Such open and curious questions demonstrate that being different makes someone more valuable—the essence of a learning orientation.

In an organization that takes this approach, people should naturally feel more comfortable opening up. As they do, minorities might consider beginning their self-disclosure by sharing status-*disconfirming* interests that help them connect with others. For instance, if a conversation turns to music, an African American who enjoys the opera or the symphony might say so, because that interest runs counter to racial stereotypes. We do not, of course, suggest being untruthful or deceitful but, rather, mindful about sharing information that serves to bridge boundaries. Over time, in an inclusive organizational culture rooted in a learning orientation, an African American employee may become equally comfortable disclosing status-*confirming* information—such as a love of Kirk Franklin.

Mentorship. Organizations should recognize that racial boundaries can be a real impediment to socializing—and that impediment isn’t going to disappear overnight. They might consider creating a buddy system of informal mentorship, in which more-experienced employees help facilitate social relationships for new hires, particularly minorities who may feel marginalized in the organization. Assigning coaches, mentors, or sponsors levels the playing field and helps people connect across differences. The role should also involve feedback. Marcus’s boss took a risk by telling him that the reason his career was stalling was that he lacked social ties; such risk taking is easier if it is part of an experienced manager’s assigned responsibilities—and an accepted and appropriate part of the feedback process.

All the people involved should go easy on one another, recognizing how challenging these activities can be and giving others the benefit of the doubt. Not only are the social behaviors we describe difficult to master (whether within or across racial boundaries), but merely discussing racial differences can be uncomfortable. It is reasonable to proceed cautiously with self-disclosure; we’ve all experienced instances of “oversharing” or “too much information.” Sharing should be encouraged thoughtfully, with support, and with a focus on small and early wins.

COLOR BLINDNESS IS not an effective strategy for dealing with racial differences in the workplace. Rather, our research suggests that acknowledging and highlighting them, along with the related challenges, can go a long way toward kindling relationships. People don’t need to be “best friends” to work effectively together, but friendships tend to create happier workers and more-effective teams. Bonding around the work itself is powerful, especially for those who are collaborating across racial boundaries. But over time, deeper relationships depend on people’s opening up about their personal lives. For that to happen, colleagues must be intentional about getting out of their comfort zones and connecting with people who are different. That may feel like a risk, but it’s one worth taking. ☺

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DIVERSIFY YOUR ORGANIZATION

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2017

“Numbers Take Us Only So Far”

Facebook’s chief diversity officer explains why stats alone won’t solve the problem of organizational bias.

→ by MAXINE WILLIAMS

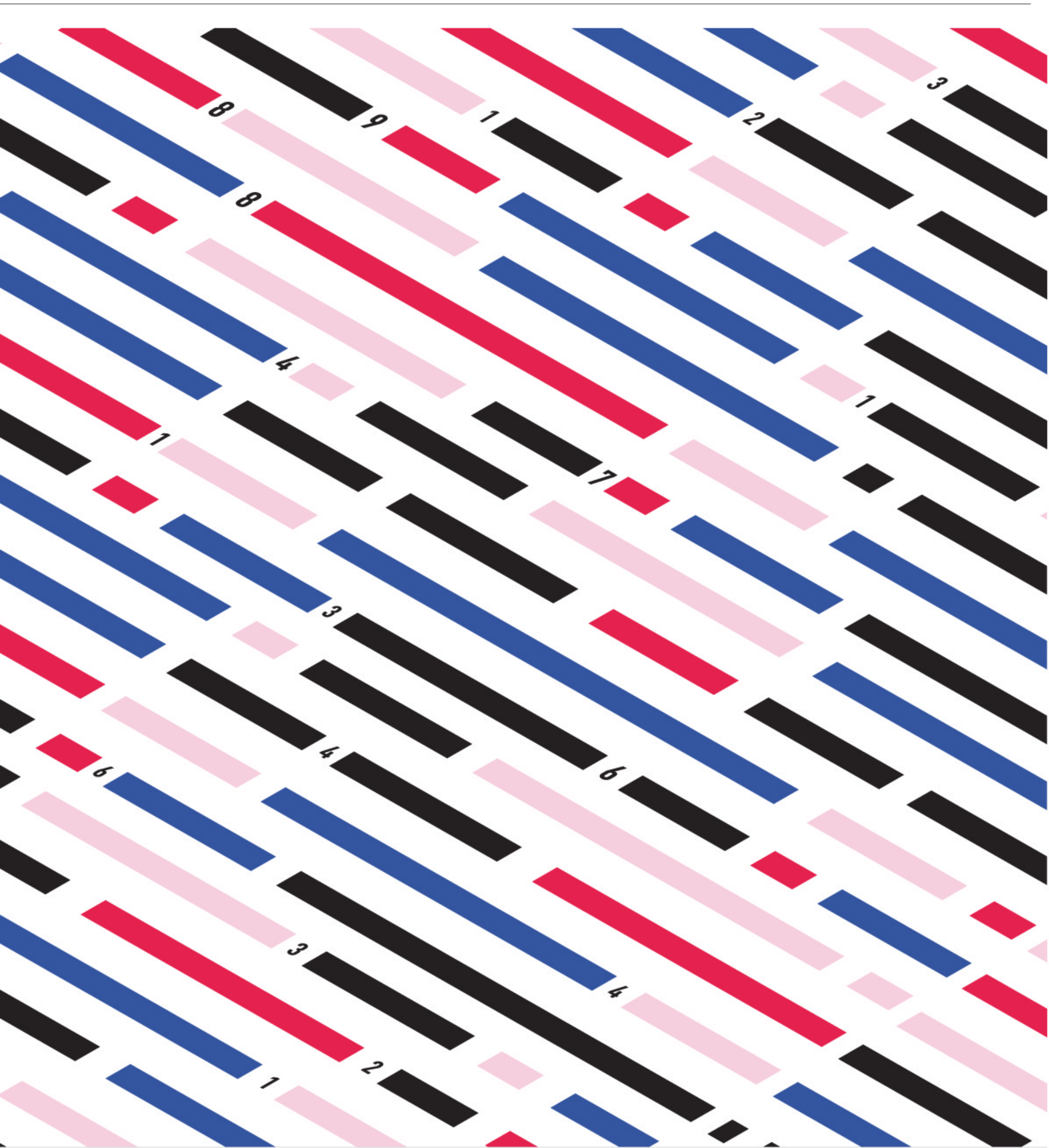
I WAS ONCE EVICTED from an apartment because I was Black. I had secured a lovely place on the banks of Lake Geneva through an agent and therefore hadn’t met the owner in person before signing the lease. Once my family and I moved in and the color of my skin was clear to see, the landlady asked us to leave. If she had known that I was Black, I was told, she would never have rented to me.

Terrible as it felt at the time, her directness was useful to me. It meant I didn’t have to scour the facts looking for some other, nonracist rationale for her sudden rejection.

Many people have been denied housing, bank loans, jobs, promotions, and

more because of their race. But they’re rarely told that’s the reason, as I was—particularly in the workplace. For one thing, such discrimination is illegal. For another, executives tend to think—and have a strong desire to believe—that they’re hiring and promoting people fairly when they aren’t. (Research shows that individuals who view themselves as objective are often the ones who apply the most unconscious bias.) Though managers don’t cite or (usually) even perceive race as a factor in their decisions, they use ambiguous assessment criteria to filter out people who aren’t like them, research by Kellogg professor Lauren Rivera shows. People in







marginalized racial and ethnic groups are deemed more often than whites to be “not the right cultural fit” or “not ready” for high-level roles; they’re taken out of the running because their “communication style” is somehow off the mark. They’re left only with lingering suspicions that their identity is the real issue, especially when decision makers’ bias is masked by good intentions.

I work in the field of diversity. I’ve also been Black my whole life. So I know that underrepresented people in the workplace yearn for two things: The first is to hear that they’re not crazy to suspect, at times, that there’s a connection between negative treatment and bias. The second is to be offered institutional support.

The first need has a clear path to fulfillment. When we encounter colleagues or friends who have been mistreated and who believe that their identity may be the reason, we should acknowledge that it’s fair to be suspicious. There’s no leap of faith here—numerous studies show how pervasive such bias still is.

But how can we address the second need? In an effort to find valid, scalable ways to counteract or reverse bias and promote diversity, organizations are turning to people analytics—a relatively new field in business operations and talent management that replaces gut decisions with data-driven practices. People analytics aspires to be “evidence based.” And for some HR issues—such as figuring out how many job interviews are needed to assess a candidate, or determining how employees’ work commutes affect their job satisfaction—it is. Statistically significant findings have led to some big changes in organizations. Unfortunately,

companies that try to apply analytics to the challenges of underrepresented groups at work often complain that the relevant data sets don’t include enough people to produce reliable insights—the sample size, the n , is too small. Basically they’re saying, “If only there were more of you, we could tell you why there are so few of you.”

Companies have access to more data than they realize, however. To supplement a small n , they can venture out and look at the larger context in which they operate. But data volume alone won’t give leaders the insight they need to increase diversity in their organizations. They must also take a closer look at the individuals from underrepresented groups who work for them—those who barely register on the analytics radar.

Supplementing the N

Nonprofit research organizations are doing important work that sheds light on how bias shapes hiring and advancement in various industries and sectors. For example, a study by the Ascend Foundation showed that in 2013 white men and white women in five major Silicon Valley firms were 154% more likely to become executives than their Asian counterparts were. And though both race and gender were factors in the glass ceiling for Asians, race had 3.7 times the impact that gender did.

It took two more years of research and analysis—using data on several hundred thousand employees, drawn from the EEOC’s aggregation of all Bay Area technology firms and from the individual reports of 13 U.S. tech companies—before

Ascend determined how bias affected the prospects of Blacks and Hispanics. Among those groups it again found that, overall, race had a greater negative impact than gender on advancement from the professional to the executive level. In the Bay Area white women fared worse than white men but much better than all Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks. Minority women faced the biggest obstacle to entering the executive ranks. Black and Hispanic women were severely challenged by both their low numbers at the professional level and their lower chances of rising from professional to executive. Asian women, who had more representation at the professional level than other minorities, had the lowest chances of moving up from professional to executive. An analysis of national data found similar results.

By analyzing industry or sector data on underrepresented groups—and examining patterns in hiring, promotions, and other decisions about talent—we can better manage the problems and risks in our own organizations. Tech companies may look at the Ascend reports and say, “Hey, let’s think about what’s happening with our competitors’ talent. There’s a good chance it’s happening here, too.” Their HR teams might then add a layer of career tracking for women of color, for example, or create training programs for managing diverse teams.

Another approach is to extrapolate lessons from other companies’ analyses. We might look, for instance, at Red Ventures, a Charlotte-based digital media company. Red Ventures is diverse by several measures. (It has a Latino CEO, and about 40% of its employees are people of color.) But that doesn’t mean

■ Executives tend to think—and have a desire to believe—they’re hiring and promoting people fairly when they’re not.

there aren’t problems to solve. When I met with its top executives, they told me they had recently done an analysis of performance reviews at the firm and found that internalized stereotypes were having a negative effect on Black and Latino employees’ self-assessments. On average, members of those two groups rated their performance 30% lower than their managers did (whereas white male employees scored their performance 10% higher than their managers did). The study also uncovered a correlation between racial isolation and negative self-perception. For example, people of color who worked in engineering generally rated themselves lower than those who worked in sales, where there were more Blacks and Latinos. These patterns were consistent at all levels, from junior to senior staff.

In response, the HR team at Red Ventures trained employees in how to do self-assessments, and that has started to close the gap for Blacks and Latinos (who more recently rated themselves 22% lower than their managers did). Hallie Cornetta, the company’s VP of human capital, explained that the training “focused on the importance of completing quantitative and qualitative self-assessments honestly, in a way that shows how employees personally view their performance across our five key dimensions, rather than how they assume their manager or peers view their performance.” She added: “We then shared tangible examples of what ‘exceptional’ versus ‘solid’ versus ‘needs improvement’ looks like in these dimensions to remove some of the subjectivity and help minority—and all—employees assess with greater direction and confidence.”

Getting Personal

Once we’ve gone broader by supplementing the *n*, we can go deeper by examining individual cases. This is critical. Algorithms and statistics do not capture what it feels like to be the only Black or Hispanic team member or the effect that marginalization has on individual employees and the group as a whole. We must talk openly with people, one-on-one, to learn about their experiences with bias, and share our own stories to build trust and make the topic safe for discussion. What we discover through those conversations is every bit as important as what shows up in the aggregated data.

An industry colleague, who served as a lead on diversity at a tech company, broke it down for me like this: “When we do our employee surveys, the Latinos always say they are happy. But I’m Latino, and I know that we are often hesitant to rock the boat. Saying the truth is too risky, so we’ll say what you want to hear—even if you sit us down in a focus group. I also know that those aggregated numbers where there are enough of us for the *n* to be significant don’t reflect the heterogeneity in our community. Someone who is light-skinned and grew up in Latin America in an upper-middle-class family probably is very happy and comfortable indeed. Someone who is darker-skinned and grew up working-class in America is probably not feeling that same sense of belonging. I’m going to spend time and effort trying to build solutions for the ones I know are at a disadvantage, whether the data tells me that there’s a problem with all Latinos or not.”

This is a recurring theme. I spoke with 10 diversity and HR professionals at companies with head counts ranging from 60



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

Despite executives’ belief that they hire and promote fairly, we know that people have been denied jobs and advancement because of their race. Managers often use ambiguous assessment criteria to filter out people who are not like them, and those in marginalized racial and ethnic groups are deemed more often than whites to be “not the right cultural fit” or “not ready” for high-level roles. Organizations need to find valid, scalable ways to counteract or reverse the biases behind these choices and to promote diversity.

PEOPLE ANALYTICS

People analytics offers some help by replacing gut decisions with data-driven practices. But not everyone registers on this radar—particularly not underrepresented groups. Hence organizations are left basically saying: “If only there were more of you, we could tell you why there are so few of you.”

THE SOLUTION

When the numbers for an underrepresented group are too small to study in your organization, the author suggests including research on that population from the larger industry or context, learning from the experiences of other firms, and doing qualitative research into individual cases within your company. Because no single research method captures all the layers of bias, companies like Facebook are building cross-functional teams to face and address such challenges.



to 300,000, all of whom are working on programs or interventions for the people who don't register as “big” in big data. They rely at least somewhat on their own intuition when exploring the impact of marginalization. This may seem counter to the mission of people analytics, which is to remove personal perspective and gut feelings from the talent equation entirely. But to discover the effects of bias in our organizations—and to identify complicating factors within groups, such as class and colorism among Latinos and others—we need to collect and analyze qualita-

tive data, too. Intuition can help us find it. The diversity and HR folks described using their “spidey sense” or knowing there is “something in the water”—essentially, understanding that bias is probably a factor, even though people analytics doesn't always prove causes and predict outcomes. Through conversations with employees—and sometimes through focus groups, if the resources are there and participants feel it's safe to be honest—they reality-check what their instincts tell them, often drawing on their own experiences with bias. One

colleague said, “The combination of qualitative and quantitative data is ideal, but at the end of the day there is nothing that data will tell us that we don't already know as Black people. I know what my experience was as an African American man who worked for 16 years in roles that weren't related to improving diversity. It's as much heart as head in this work.”

A Call to Action

The proposition at the heart of people analytics is sound—if you want to hire and manage fairly, gut-based decisions are not enough. However, we have to create a new approach, one that also works for small data sets—for the marginalized and the underrepresented.

Here are my recommendations:

First, analysts must challenge the traditional minimum confidence, pushing themselves to look beyond the limited hard data. They don't have to prove that the difference in performance ratings between Blacks and whites is “statistically significant” to help managers understand the impact of bias in performance reviews. We already know from the breadth and depth of social science research about bias that it is pervasive in the workplace and influences ratings, so we can combine those insights with what we hear and see on the ground and simply start operating as if bias exists in our companies. We may have to place a higher value on the experiences shared by five or 10 employees—or look more carefully at the descriptive data, such as head counts for underrepresented groups and average job satisfaction scores cut by race and gender—to examine the impact of bias at a more granular level.

ANASTASIA SAPON

■ Algorithms and statistics do not capture what it feels like to be the only Black or Hispanic member of a team.

In addition, analysts should frequently provide confidence intervals—that is, guidance on how much managers can trust the data if the *n*'s are too small to prove statistical significance. When managers get that information, they're more likely to make changes in their hiring and management practices, even if they believe—as most do—that they are already treating people fairly. Suppose, for example, that as Red Ventures began collecting data on self-assessments, analysts had a 75% confidence level that Blacks and Latinos were underrating themselves. The analysts could then have advised managers to go to their minority direct reports, examine the results from that performance period, and determine together whether the self-reviews truly reflected their contributions. It's a simple but collaborative way to address implicit bias or stereotyping that you're reasonably sure is there while giving agency to each employee.

Second, companies also need to be more consistent and comprehensive in their qualitative analysis. Many already conduct interviews and focus groups to gain insights on the challenges of the underrepresented; some even do textual analysis of written performance reviews, exit interview notes, and hiring memos, looking for language that signals bias or negative stereotyping. But we have to go further. We need to find a viable way to create and process more-objective performance evaluations, given the internalized biases of both employees and managers, and to determine how those biases affect ratings.

This journey begins with educating all employees on the real-life impact of bias and negative stereotypes. At

Facebook we offer a variety of training programs with an emphasis on spotting and counteracting bias, and we keep reinforcing key messages post-training, since we know these muscles take time to build. We issue reminders at critical points to shape decision making and behavior. For example, in our performance evaluation tool, we incorporate prompts for people to check word choice when writing reviews and self-assessments. We remind them, for instance, that terms like “cultural fit” can allow bias to creep in and that they should avoid describing women as “bossy” if they wouldn't describe men who demonstrated the same behaviors that way. We don't yet have data on how this is influencing the language used—it's a new intervention—but we will be examining patterns over time.

Perhaps above all, HR and analytics departments must value both qualitative and quantitative expertise and apply mixed-method approaches everywhere possible. At Facebook we're building cross-functional teams with both types of specialists, because no single research method can fully capture the complex layers of bias that everyone brings to the workplace. We view all research methods as trying to solve the same problem from different angles. Sometimes we approach challenges from a quantitative perspective first, to uncover the “what” before looking to the qualitative experts to dive into the “why” and “how.” For instance, if the numbers showed that certain teams were losing or attracting minority employees at higher rates than others (the “what”), we might conduct interviews, run focus groups, or analyze text from company surveys to understand the “why,” and pull out themes or

lessons for other parts of the company. In other scenarios we might reverse the order of those steps. For example, if we repeatedly heard from members of one social group that they weren't seeing their peers getting recognized at the same rate as people in other groups, we could then investigate whether numerical trends confirmed those observations, or conduct statistical analyses to figure out which organizational circumstances were associated with employees' being more or less likely to get recognized.

Cross-functional teams also help us reap the benefits of cognitive diversity. Working together stretches everyone, challenging team members' own assumptions and biases. Getting to absolute “whys” and “hows” on any issue, from recruitment to engagement to performance, is always going to be tough. But we believe that with this approach, we stand the best chance of making improvements across the company. As we analyze the results of Facebook's Pulse survey, given twice a year to employees, and review Performance Summary Cycle inputs, we'll continue to look for signs of problems as well as progress.

EVIDENCE OF DISCRIMINATION or unfair outcomes may not be as certain or obvious in the workplace as it was for me the time I was evicted from my apartment. But we can increase our certainty, and it's essential that we do so. The underrepresented people at our companies are not crazy to perceive biases working against them, and they can get institutional support. © **HBR Reprint R1706L**

Maxine Williams is Facebook's chief diversity officer.



DIVERSIFY YOUR ORGANIZATION

Quick Takes



1. U.S. Businesses Must Take Meaningful Action Against Racism

→ by LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS and ELLA F. WASHINGTON

THE UNITED STATES is in crisis. As we write this article, videos of racial violence and racist threats toward Black people in America flood social and news media channels. Public demonstrations against injustice are happening in at least 30 localities. During nonviolent protests, other parties have engaged in

vandalism and looting, spurring varied and often disproportionate police responses. Several cities are burning, while Covid-19 continues to rage throughout the country, hitting minority communities the hardest.

In a week that focused on “reopening the economy,” everyone has become keenly

aware that there is more than one pandemic affecting U.S. lives and local economies. As the American Psychological Association has declared, “We are [also] living in a racism pandemic.” World leaders are weighing in. The United Nations has urged action from U.S. authorities.

No matter your racial, political, or other identity, these events are almost impossible to escape. In particular, millions of Black people and their allies are hurting. And these issues are not ones that organizations or their leaders—from CEOs at the top of the hierarchy to team managers on the front line—can ignore.

While conventional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives focus on employee engagement and belonging, today’s challenges reach far beyond marginalization in the workplace. We now see and hear Black people who are suffering from the weight of dehumanizing injustice and the open wound of racism that has been festering for centuries. Black leaders like Robert Sellers, the University of Michigan’s vice provost for equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer, are openly sharing their feelings of exasperation. Blogs like Danielle Cadet’s caution

readers that “[y]our Black colleagues may look like they’re okay—chances are they’re not.” Another social media message that has gone viral really struck us: “There are Black men and women in Zoom meetings maintaining ‘professionalism,’ biting their tongues, holding back tears and swallowing rage, while we endure attacks from a pandemic and police. Understand and be mindful.”

The psychological impact of these public events—and the way it carries over into the workplace—cannot be overstated. Research shows that how organizations respond to large-scale, diversity-related events that receive significant media attention can either help employees feel psychologically safe or contribute to racial identity threat and mistrust of institutions of authority. Without adequate support, minority employees are likely to perceive their environments as more interpersonally and institutionally biased against them. Leaders seeking to create an inclusive environment for everyone must find ways to address these topics.

Avoiding Missteps

First, we’d like to outline three common missteps to avoid:

KLAUS VEDFELT/GETTY IMAGES

■ People are looking for leaders to affirm their right to safety and personhood and help them feel protected.

Keeping silent. For people not directly impacted by these events, the default response is often silence. Many whites avoid talking about race because they fear being seen as prejudiced, so they adopt strategic color blindness instead. We know that many managers also think they lack the skills to have difficult conversations around differences.

But no one has the perfect words to address atrocities in our society. It is the leader's responsibility to try, conveying care and concern for all employees but especially targeted groups. As Desmond Tutu once said, "If you are neutral in the situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." You might be tempted to rest on the laurels of your organization's diversity statements and active employee resource groups. But that is not enough. The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. remind us: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Becoming overly defensive. Another common misstep when approaching uncomfortable conversations about racial injustice is to react defensively, especially when our worldviews,

positions, or advantages are questioned or challenged. Robin DiAngelo's research on white fragility highlights this phenomenon. For instance, when learning about police brutality against unarmed Black people, one reaction might be to search for evidence about what the victim did to deserve abuse rather than demonstrate compassion and empathy. Another example is diminishing protesters by focusing on and judging those who engaged in looting instead of discussing the unjust act that drove people to the streets. Leaders must resist such reactions because they do not allow for constructive engagement. Instead, they make members of targeted groups feel even more alienated. Remember that comments on systemic inequalities are not personal attacks.

Overgeneralizing. When triggering events occur, people tend to make sweeping generalizations about the groups involved in the public conflict. Though individuals of the same race, gender, or other identity often have shared experiences, there is diversity within groups that should be recognized. Instead of presuming that all members of your in-group or

out-group think and feel similarly and talking about what "everybody knows," how "all of us feel," and what "none of us would ever do," leave room for dissenting points of view. When in doubt, ask employees about their individual experiences to honor their uniqueness. Think about how you can allow your employees to discuss what's happening without putting them on the spot or asking them to speak for everyone in their identity group.

Best Buy's senior leadership team offered one of the first corporate statements acknowledging the death of George Floyd under a white police officer's knee in Minnesota, the harassment of bird-watcher Christian Cooper by a white woman in New York City, and the death of jogger Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of an armed white gunman in Georgia, while also paying service to the fact that the Black experience in America is not monolithic: "We write about these... events...not because most of us know what this fear must be like. We are as a group, by and large, not people of color. We write this not because most of us have known anyone personally in a situation like this. Thankfully, most of us do not. We write this because it could have been

any one of our friends or colleagues at Best Buy, or in our personal lives, lying on the ground, struggling to breathe or filming someone as they threatened us."

Citigroup CEO Michael Corbat acknowledged that many employees have experienced racism in their everyday lives in overt and subtle ways. "I want you to know that your colleagues and I will always stand with you," he said in a memo to employees. "While I can try to empathize with what it must be like to be a Black person in America, I haven't walked in those shoes."

Taking Meaningful Action

Next, we'd like to provide a framework for meaningful action. Leaders must not only offer physical and psychological safety—they also have the power and platform to lead change. Statements from the top are valuable, but they are just a start. Anyone, at any level of the organization, can take small steps to exercise greater compassion and initiate action that provides needed support and promotes racial justice for Black workers as well as others who are marginalized. Managers have a particularly important role in connecting with their



employees on these issues. Here's how:

Acknowledge. It's important to acknowledge any harm that your Black and brown coworkers have endured. This means committing to lifelong learning about racism. Seek the facts about racist events, as well as the aggressions and microaggressions that your minority coworkers have most likely faced inside and outside your organization. We suggest the following steps:

Do:

- Conduct research to fully understand events, using data from reliable sources. Take the initiative to search beyond social media.
- Give your Black and brown employees the space to be angry, afraid, disenchanted, or even disengaged from work
- Seek out support from your human resources team or office of diversity and inclusion. Books and articles can also be good resources. Three we recommend are *Race, Work and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2019), which one of us edited and to which we both contributed, as well as the related HBR article series, *Toward a Racially Just Workplace*; *The Person You*

Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias, by Dolly Chugh (Harper Business, 2018); and *How to Be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi (One World, 2018). There are also free resources such as the Talking About Race web portal from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Don't:

- Rely on Black and brown people to educate you about what happened in order to justify their hurt and outrage or counter "color-blind" rhetoric
- Ask your Black and brown leaders or employees to comfort or advocate for colleagues or justice initiatives

In the organizational setting, you have the power to step up. JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon and the company's diversity chief Brian Lamb wrote a memo to U.S. employees stating: "This week's terrible events in Minneapolis, together with too many others occurring around our country, are tragic and heartbreaking. Let us be clear—we are watching, listening and want every single one of you to know we are committed to fighting against racism and discrimination wherever and however it exists."

Georgetown University president John DeGioia wrote a heartfelt message to the community acknowledging the harm of a series of racist events: "On too many occasions over the years, there has been cause for me to share reflections with our community, as we grapple with the devastating impact of racism and hatred in our nation. In August 2014, following the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; in December 2015, following the grand jury decision in the killing of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; in August 2017, following the march of white supremacists and neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia. In these moments, which encompass far from the full extent of experiences of racism and racist violence, I have tried to frame the work in which we must engage within the mission and purpose of the Academy."

Affirm. People are looking for leaders to affirm their right to safety and personhood and help them feel protected. When presidents, governors, mayors, and sheriffs aren't doing so, corporate, university, and nonprofit leaders can. This means offering continued opportunities for reaction, reflection, conversation, growth,

development, impact, and advancement. Affirmation can start with creating a space for employees to share. For example, when asked, "How are you today?" many people of color respond in a scripted manner instead of answering honestly. Instead, use more-thoughtful prompts and questions.

You might say something like this: "I've been thinking about the harm of racism in our country, especially considering recent events." Next, describe your personal reaction and concerns, then make a commitment. "I'd like to help in promoting equity, so here's one thing I plan to do to help prevent future tragedies like these." Explain those intentions. Then, offer to engage. "Please let me know if there's anything else I can do to be supportive, even if you just want to talk about what's happening. I understand if you don't, and I won't be offended. But I just want you to know that the door is open, and that I care." The last line is important. Not everyone will be interested in or comfortable with discussing racism at work, especially if they haven't built a solid foundation of trust.

Act. Think critically about how you can use your power to effect change. Employees

value words of understanding and encouragement, but leaders' and organizations' actions have a more lasting impact. We have witnessed some courageous steps, such as Joan Gabel, president of the University of Minnesota, ending contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department after George Floyd's death. Franklin Templeton Investments fired executive employee Amy Cooper after her interaction with Chris Cooper in Central Park.

DeGioia's statement went on to say: "Our role in society—to pursue the truth—through the methodologies and disciplines through which we establish knowledge in our world, demands our engagement. In our response, we have sought to accelerate our academic commitment to addressing racial justice and to address our own connection to the institution of slavery and the enduring legacy of racism and to undo the structural elements that sustain this legacy."

More examples include YouTube pledging \$1 million to the Center for Policing Equity, Glossier giving \$500,000 to support racial justice organizations and another \$500,000 to Black-owned beauty brands, and Peloton not only donating \$500,000

to the NAACP but also calling for its members to speak up for and learn ways to practice anti-racism.

What can you and your organization do in your community? What would promote equity and justice and activate meaningful change? Whether you are a senior or junior leader, how can you advocate for such action?

Racism isn't just Black people's problem; it's everyone's problem because it erodes the fabric of society. Leaders at every level must use their power, platforms, and resources to help employees and communities overcome these challenges and build a better world for us all.

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2. How U.S. Companies Can Support Employees of Color Through the Pandemic

→ by LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS, COURTNEY L. MCCLUNEY, ERIN L. THOMAS, and MICHELLE KIM

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 has been felt in homes and workplaces across the globe. Although there's plenty of rhetoric about how we're all in this together, the fallout from the pandemic clearly shows that we are not in the same boat. The direct impact of Covid-19 on Black and brown communities in the U.S. is staggering.

From a health perspective, it's clear that Black and brown workers and their families are suffering unequally. Preexisting conditions coupled with inequitable access to health care services are contributing to rising cases among Native American nations and a disproportionate number of deaths in Black and Latinx communities.

Black and brown workers are overrepresented on the front lines as "essential" workers in low-status, low-wage service occupations in the U.S. Their greater exposure increases vulnerability of contracting and dying of the disease. This dynamic showcases the long-standing reality of occupational segmentation, as certain demographic segments have the privilege of "sheltering" in protected environments (for example, working from home), while others remain exposed in more dangerous and lower-paying roles.

Covid-19 has also exposed heightened anti-Asian racism in the U.S., where Asians and Asian Americans have been targeted with racial slurs and



assaults in workplaces and public spaces. New databases indicate more than 1,700 reports of hate crimes and xenophobic rhetoric targeted toward Asians in America since mid-March. Psychologists have attributed increases in racial scapegoating to the conditions of fear and blame created by a crisis; in this case, Asians have been blamed for the spread of the virus because of its origins in Wuhan, China, further perpetuated by media and diplomatic labeling of Covid-19 as the “Chinese virus.”

So while all employees are likely grieving from losses incurred by this crisis, these disparities make clear that the impact may be felt more acutely among racial and ethnic minority workers. Black and brown employees and their families are not only overrepresented in vulnerable occupations; they are also vulnerable to trauma from racial inequalities outside of work, which are compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. Prior research indicates that firsthand and vicarious exposure to police brutality, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, separation of families at the border, and immigration bands deteriorate Black and brown workers’ engagement at work, especially when they

feel unable to discuss societal racism and its effects on their well-being. The impact of Covid-19 disparities may similarly impact work engagement among employees of color.

Further, the astonishing numbers of people of color who are dying of Covid-19 include faith and community leaders and trailblazers who overcame racism, poverty, and other obstacles before succumbing to coronavirus. Research shows that leaders of color must “beat the odds” to advance to leadership roles and advocate on behalf of those who are less fortunate. The recent Covid-19 losses of Black and brown leaders represent the loss of role models, guides, and advocates, which is costly for organizations that lack successors among leaders of color.

Clearly, this pandemic has unearthed and magnified structural and systemic inequities. This means that individual grit and willpower alone are insufficient forces for countering the impact of coronavirus on Black and brown employees. Because of this, managers and company leaders have an important role to play in engaging Black, brown, and other marginalized employees, acting as an important layer of support. Further, companies can bolster Black and brown mem-

bers of the broader community as well. Equipped with social consciousness and compassion, leaders across levels can validate, affirm, and support people of color in three important ways—at the team, organizational, and societal levels.

AT THE TEAM LEVEL

Humanize the Workplace with More Meaningful One-on-One and Team Interactions

Leaders can demonstrate care for employees of color by supporting them across multiple layers of identity—from their racial identities to other specific individual needs. These practices can help you learn how to best support all employees coping in this pandemic as well.

Be proactive and specific when asking how you can best provide support.

To better understand your employees’ needs, go beyond a casual “How are you?” and start asking specific questions about their well-being (“How are you, really?” or “Are you getting enough sleep?”). Also directly ask what you or your organization can do to support their unique needs (“What additional resources do you need right now?” or “Can the

company do anything to make your life easier?”). Asking questions in this manner allows you to hone in on how best to help, and it can reveal gaps in organizational resources and programs that may need to be ramped up.

Make room for people to care for themselves.

The number of people experiencing psychological trauma typically exceeds those with physical injury by as much as 40 to 1 during global disasters. And yet employees may be reluctant to ask for time off or other accommodations during a crisis, as work becomes busier or more unpredictable, and they try to avoid being seen as less-than-essential workers. That’s why leaders need to give them explicit permission to take time to care for themselves and their loved ones and find ways to cope with direct and vicarious trauma. To do this, prioritize work tasks frequently and aggressively so that employees can focus on what is most urgent and important. The rest of their time and energy should be spent taking care of themselves and their loved ones.

Challenge biased, racist, and xenophobic behaviors in the moment—especially in team settings. With the

■ This pandemic has unearthed and magnified structural and systemic inequities.

rise of fear and anxiety, you may observe employees making jokes or flippant comments about the outbreak that are rooted in anti-Asian bias and xenophobic beliefs. We recently heard of a virtual workplace gathering (not in our organizations) during which an employee discussed buying protective masks that were made in China. Two of their colleagues then proceeded to joke about how the masks were likely infected from the “China virus.” When left unaddressed, these insidious comments and behaviors become permissible and normalized in workplace culture. Make it a point to intervene in the moment by challenging underlying biases and assumptions (“What made you say that?” or “That’s not funny and you need to stop”).

AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Provide Tailored Support for Employees Who Are Most Impacted

This involves building company camaraderie while also acknowledging disparate experiences and impacts. There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to creating an inclusive and psychologically safe culture. Even in the best of times, diffused diversity

efforts tend to overlook Black and brown contributors or even disadvantage them. But given the clear data that this virus does, in fact, discriminate against Black and brown Americans, it’s even more pressing than before that leaders be specific when acknowledging and naming the issues facing particular communities.

Avoid “color-blind” company communications that minimize the disproportionate strain on employees of color.

Although statements like “We’re all in this together” or “This is a great equalizer” feel unifying, color-blind messaging generally fails to resonate with employees of color and has been shown to impede actual performance. A line from one of the weekly Covid-19 e-mails at Upwork, where Erin leads diversity, inclusion, and belonging, provides an example of how to uplift all employees while also earmarking the distinct experiences of Black and brown workers:

“Counties in both the Bay Area and Illinois have issued orders mandating that residents over the age of 12 must wear face masks when interacting with others who are not members of their household

in public and private spaces starting at noon Wednesday, April 22nd. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is difficult to purchase during this time, so we have added resources to our intranet site. To our Black and brown team members, we are troubled by the fact that wearing PPE is a risk unto itself, and also want to equip all who choose to wear masks with the knowledge to do so.”

Create intentional spaces to uncover the experiences, sentiments, and needs of employees of color.

In April, Upwork partnered with Awaken to design a forum to address the Covid 19–related uptick of anti-Asian racism and discrimination. Two of us (Erin and Michelle) partnered with the leadership of Upwork’s Pan-Asian Employee Resource Group to highlight the real stories of Upwork’s Asian employees. This authentic conversation generated urgency around what these employees and their loved ones were experiencing, and it motivated and inspired the rest of the company to ally with their Asian colleagues. The forum also educated employees on the science and history of bias and equipped them with concrete tactics to disrupt their own biases

and call out xenophobia in others.

Analyze and expand mental health benefits and resources that will aid employees who are experiencing trauma and grief.

This process should include an audit of your current bereavement and leave policies, giving HR and managers tools for supporting grieving employees and assessing how culturally informed employee assistance programs and in-network therapists are. Starbucks is one of several employers that are expanding their mental health benefits by providing employees and their families with 20 free sessions of therapy or coaching per year.

Audit the diversity and equity implications of all talent decisions (layoffs, furloughs, pay cuts).

Research from Alexandra Kalev shows that Black and brown employees are more likely to be laid off due to their disproportionate concentration in lower-level positions. To assess whether that is—or is in danger of—happening at your company, Kalev recommends several strategies including keeping track of your layoff lists, taking stock of performance more than position, and cross-training and upskilling workers.

■ There is a growing public expectation of business leaders to take a stand on important social and cultural issues that impact society at large.

Hire with urgency and an equitable process, with a specific focus on laid-off and furloughed individuals. As mass layoffs and furloughs occur, some companies are sharing lists of ex-employees to aid the employment process in their next role. If you are able to hire right now, consider expediting your typical protocols to help others secure employment more efficiently than ever. Ensure your hiring process is designed with equity in mind to take advantage of the currently available talent pool, which includes a large number of people of color.

AT THE SOCIETAL LEVEL

Bolster External Communities

The call to action for businesses to show up for Black and brown communities is more pronounced than ever. Corporate social responsibility has long been considered a strategic differentiator for many businesses, aiding in brand reputation and employees' sense of purpose and morale. There is no shortage of opportunities available for organizations to rise to the occasion.

Redirect corporate giving to local organizations impacted by the

economic crisis. Companies including Salesforce, Verizon, and Facebook announced emergency relief funds for small businesses, while some are launching efforts to provide relief for minority-owned small businesses. Long before shelter-in-place orders went into effect, small businesses owned by Asians and storefronts located in Chinatowns nationwide saw a drastic dip in patronage. Black and brown business owners continue to face biases from banking institutions, so direct funding efforts are needed now more than ever to support individuals facing a higher risk of institutional discrimination. If you are not in a position of power to influence or enact corporate giving, you can still make a difference by sharing lists of local organizations people can volunteer with or donate to or encouraging your company leadership to consider matching donations.

Consider public action to accelerate legal measures and policies that support the most vulnerable populations. There is a growing public expectation of business leaders to take a stand on important social and cultural issues that impact society at large. From PwC chairman Tim Ryan's

memo condemning the 2017 white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville to Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff's public denouncing of anti-LGBTQ legislation, we have seen leaders of reputable companies put out public statements to accelerate social change that require governmental and societal-level support. In light of the disparate and deadly impact of Covid-19 on Black and brown employees, business leaders have an opportunity to take a bold stand on creating systemic safety nets that can benefit the most vulnerable in our society today. These could include advocating for expanded unemployment benefits, small-business economic relief programs, and police accountability during a time of heightened policing.

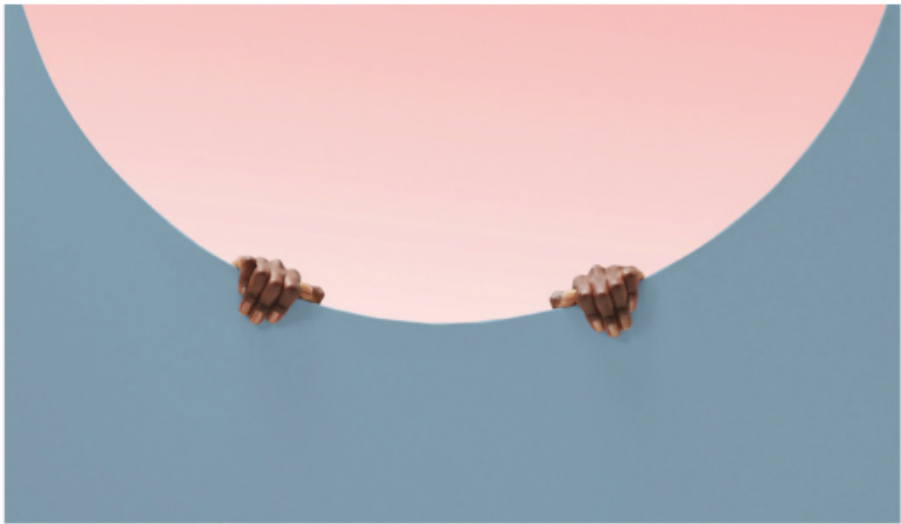
This pandemic calls for courageous leadership rooted in empathy, compassion, and social consciousness. Now is the time to stress-test the integrity of corporate values and actualize the mantra of "bring your whole selves to work." The experiences of employees of color are not special interests or adjacent details to the story of how organizations respond to this moment in history. Rather, centering and uplifting employees and communities of color can define our organizational footprints

for generations to come. Doing so has always been important—it is more urgent now than ever before.

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3. How Organizations Are Failing Black Workers—and How to Do Better

→ by ADIA HARVEY WINGFIELD

IT'S COMMON TODAY for organizations and industries to state their commitment to attracting workers of color. In the tech industry, for instance, companies like Google and Apple say that they want to increase diversity, and leaders in health care are slowly starting to grapple with the need for more Black doctors given demographic changes.

But change has happened slowly, if at all. Much like medicine, Black workers in particular are underrepre-

sented in occupations like law and finance, and it's not because of their own shortcomings or "pipeline issues." I've been studying Black workers for nearly 15 years, and the research and data in this area show that organizations are failing Black workers, especially those in professional occupations, in three key ways:

Relying too much on social networks and personal connections to fill available positions. By leaning

too heavily on informal links, organizations are taking an approach that has overwhelmingly been known to exclude Blacks. Who potential applicants know has taken on outsized importance in the hiring process. In a study of elite professional services firms (law, consulting, finance), sociologist Lauren Rivera reports that companies display a very strong preference for graduates of a few select, elite East Coast universities. Some companies often won't even consider candidates who attended a different school and lack a connection at the firm. Anthropologist Ilana Gershon also shows that the reliance on personal connections forms a critical component to how people find work today, with personal branding and use of social media sites such as LinkedIn playing a central role.

While it might seem simpler and more efficient to rely on personal connections, this limits Black applicants' access to many organizations, because the majority of the people who already work at them are white—and white people tend to have networks full of other white people. Even today, neighborhoods, peer groups, and schools remain largely racially homogenous. In fact, 75% of whites polled in one

2014 survey from the Public Religion Research Institute had no friends outside their racial group. Sometimes this exclusion happens organically; other times whites intentionally reserve leads and tips about potential jobs for other whites. But the end result is that the tendency in organizations to rely on social connections in hiring ends up excluding Black workers.

Having lukewarm, ineffective, or simply nonexistent policies around diversity and inclusion.

As broader support for affirmative action has waned, many companies have shifted toward defining diversity loosely around ambiguous, overly broad goals such as "diversity of thought" or "diversity of opinion." There may be perceived benefits in this shift for white managers. For one, it allows them to construct their goals in ways that may be more palatable to those unenthusiastic about affirmative action. It also gives them permission to avoid conversations about race. But this approach does little to address the specific issues that affect Black workers. Companies that haven't clearly articulated how they will support workers of color specifically are unlikely to be able to respond when issues of racial discrimination or

■ Without clear policies in place, Black workers shoulder the burden of trying to navigate hostile work environments themselves.

harassment arise—and they do, frequently.

Sociologist Louwanda Evans shows that Black workers in the airline industry routinely face exclusion and isolation from white pilots, flight attendants, and customers. Sometimes these workplace interactions involve uncomfortable exchanges that are driven by explicit racial stereotyping; in more severe cases, these can result in denied promotions or other opportunities. But without clear policies in place that address these particular kinds of incidents, Black workers shoulder the burden of trying to disprove stereotypes and navigate hostile work environments themselves, without critical institutional support. Pushing for “diversity of thought” among all-white senior management teams doesn’t necessarily help a Black flight attendant facing an openly unwelcoming work environment.

Channeling Black workers into the least-secure and least-prestigious jobs, like public-sector or human resources roles. In many cases, this happens because hiring managers decide what sorts of workers seem to “fit” certain types of jobs, and these subjective evaluations often hew closely to racial

stereotypes. Black men are routinely perceived to lack the “soft skills” (likability and motivation, for example) that are valued for management jobs. These perceptions can then justify denying Black men access to these positions, leaving them underrepresented in jobs with high levels of authority and status. The end result is internal organizational segregation with Black workers overrepresented in the positions that have little opportunity for growth or advancement. In addition, these jobs are often the most vulnerable to downsizing, creating a heightened risk that organizations will lose the Black workers they actually do employ.

Organizations can do better. The good news is that research offers insights into some of the most effective ways forward.

Focusing explicitly on addressing racial and gender discrimination—rather than the loosely defined “diversity” buzzword—helps companies make better progress toward achieving actual racial diversity. In one study of more than 700 private-sector firms, the companies that made the most advancement toward changing their workforces were those that required managers to show specific diversity gains in

the areas of race and gender. When organizations hold managers responsible for their efforts to improve racial and gender diversity, they produce better results than organizations that rely on diversity trainings or formal mentoring programs. Without these targeted initiatives, organizations run the risk of pursuing diversity in ways that do little to reduce discriminatory processes for Black employees.

When managers are motivated to be accountable for antidiscrimination efforts, this can even help organizations avoid reducing diversity during layoffs. This is especially true if managers are not required to focus on specific positions or tenures when making staffing cuts. Given that Black workers tend to be overrepresented in the most vulnerable jobs, sociology professor Alexandra Kalev finds that if managers are pushed to comply with organizational commitments to antidiscrimination, they are better equipped to find ways to balance layoffs with an eye toward maintaining some degree of racial diversity.

Furthermore, organizational behavior professor Herminia Ibarra contends that sponsoring workers across gender and racial lines is far more beneficial

for underrepresented groups than mentoring. Mentorship simply means being available to answer questions and provide guidance, but sponsorship occurs when people have an advocate and supporter who will actively speak for and champion them. For Black workers, having highly placed sponsors within organizations can help prevent the kind of internal segregation that leaves them underrepresented in influential high-ranking roles.

Organizations have to go beyond the “add one and stir” approach to bringing in more workers of color. A 2018 report from LeanIn.org and McKinsey revealed that “onlys”—the lone representatives of an identity group—have higher rates of mistrust, skepticism, and doubt about their organizations’ goals, motivations, and ability to support people like them. The same report showed that for women, being an “only” is also correlated to higher rates of sexual harassment. Companies can stop failing Black workers by hiring a critical mass of them, particularly at high-functioning, elite levels where they can be influential. Research shows that when women are more highly represented on corporate boards and in the C-suite, conditions improve for other



women in the organization. A similar phenomenon may occur when Black women hold high-ranking positions within companies. These downstream effects are a compelling reason to make sure that your organization is hiring and elevating Black women, too.

Organizations need to reconsider how best to draw from Black workers who bring different experiences, backgrounds, and strengths. It's not enough to tiptoe around the fact that racial disparities persist. Head-on efforts to resolve these issues are necessary. There's still work to do in this arena, but research shows us that it is possible.

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4. The Day-to-Day Work of Diversity and Inclusion

A conversation with Airbnb's Melissa Thomas-Hunt on creating a culture in which Black employees can thrive.

→ by PAIGE COHEN and GRETCHEN GAVETT

MOST LEADERS OF U.S. companies know that attracting diverse employees is good business. In response, the prevalence of diversity and inclusion professionals has increased and diversity trainings have become the norm. Yet these efforts, at least in their current forms, aren't boosting the representation of African Americans in

organizations and in leadership roles (see "Toward a Racially Just Workplace," on p. 10). What needs to change to create racially inclusive workplaces? And how can managers be the catalysts?

Dr. Melissa Thomas-Hunt is Airbnb's head of global diversity and belonging and has been working in the

diversity and inclusion space for decades, both at organizations and in academia. She spoke with us about how diversity efforts can do a better job of addressing the needs of Black workers. She emphasized that there's no quick fix: "Big wins will come from interrogating seemingly mundane practices and processes, and holding managers



and leaders accountable for progress toward your organization's aspirations."

An edited version of our conversation with Dr. Thomas-Hunt is below.

HBR: How do you design a diversity and inclusion program for Black workers to reach leadership positions—and succeed in them?

Thomas-Hunt: Creating a work environment in which Black employees can thrive requires deliberate, sustained efforts focused primarily in three areas: data and numbers, company culture, and day-to-day people management.

We know that numbers matter because who you hire, and at what level, directly affects the overarching narrative of what is normal and accepted in your organization. For example, if the majority of your leadership roles are occupied by white workers, you are sending the message that this group has the most potential to contribute at high levels. To change this narrative, as a first step, companies need to put more effort into increasing their pipeline of Black workers.

To be clear, it's no easy feat getting Black employees into an organization—and this is true globally for members of the Black diaspora living in

places in which they are the minority. Historical artifacts of power and privilege create all kinds of roadblocks for Black people. Even when economics and levels of education are comparable, social capital—or the networks people need to gain access to opportunities—may be less available to Black professionals than to their white counterparts.

So companies need to start putting more systems into place, whether through HR or recruiters, that will help them identify, attract, and hire Black talent—including senior talent into critical leadership roles. But this alone is not enough. Organizations also need to make sure that the Black employees they are hiring into lower-level positions are being given opportunities that set them up for success and growth. This means undergoing fundamental shifts in the cultures they create. Black employees need to enter generative work environments—ones that allow all people to grow, develop, and flourish, and ones that signal they are valued. Without these, there will be a revolving door of Black talent who arrive excited, energized, and ready to contribute and leave feeling unseen and demoralized.

How can you make this culture change happen?

Though culture change is hard, and the path to it seems murky, we do know that managers are the front line. They're the ones with the power to make employees feel safe enough to contribute their knowledge and perspectives. Managers have the ability to build relationships across difference through their access to other team members and leaders. And managers can use their status to provide growth opportunities to Black workers through committed sponsorship efforts and by communicating their value—including their expertise, potential, and accomplishments—to others.

Real culture change will start when managers learn how to do this, and it will require a top-down approach. Companies need to make it clear that a great supervisor is someone who creates an environment in which a diverse array of people can succeed. HR professionals need to be empowered to help managers advance inclusive behaviors and eliminate those that erode inclusion, belonging, and engagement. Resources need to be put toward training managers to understand the ways in which their own identities



DR. MELISSA THOMAS-HUNT, PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOE HOWELL/VANDERBILT

■ Organizations need to create cultures of curiosity where people are in a constant state of discovery, learning about themselves and others.

impact the way they engage with others. When situations arise in which Black employees are experiencing microaggressions or outright discrimination, managers should know how to properly address the issues and escalate if necessary.

Organizations also need to create cultures of curiosity where people are in a constant state of discovery, learning about themselves and others. Managers can help make this happen by regularly asking their employees what they need. Holding regular check-ins with each employee is a good way for managers to demonstrate genuine interest in their team's well-being and build a foundation of trust. They should use this time to ask people if they feel supported and safe enough to contribute on a regular basis. This time will also help managers troubleshoot any issues that come up and understand their team members and aspirations, as well as how they can help them get where they want to go.

Lastly, managers should be expected to provide specific, actionable feedback to all employees and push past any hesitations they have about how that feedback will land—a fear that often stops white managers from giving Black employees critical

feedback. Like everyone else, Black employees need honest feedback in order to grow and to get access to leadership opportunities down the line.

At some companies, talking about race consists of one formal conversation a year. How can leaders encourage more-frequent discussions?

Conversations about race at work are challenging to have, or even begin, when the people involved don't have a positive relationship. That's why, at regular intervals, your employees should be encouraged to spend time with team members who appear to be different from themselves, or peers whom they do not know well. Remember that people must choose to create space for building relationships before they feel comfortable having hard conversations when racially charged situations do arise. So it's best to start building those relationships now. When opportunities for discussions surrounding race or ethnicity do come up, those participating will be more likely to assume positive intent. For the conversation to be productive, both parties need to agree that missteps will happen and demonstrate a genuine

interest in one another's experiences and perspectives.

How can you get leaders and managers on board with all these suggestions?

Organizations need to take every opportunity to communicate what is expected of their leaders. It's not the organization's job to change attitudes. But it is their job to weave their values into the processes and practices that reinforce company culture, making sure that everyone—from individual contributors to those in leadership roles—is demonstrating behaviors that align with them.

Holding people accountable is vital to doing this successfully. If senior leaders espouse a set of values but fail to keep the people who report to them accountable for their actions or inactions, middle and lower managers will have little incentive to uphold those values and will focus instead on the business goals that are being measured. We are humans, and our attitudes are imperfect. That's why providing incentives—such as measuring diversity and inclusion efforts in performance evaluations, linking them to salary increases or other forms of compensation, and giving employees who demonstrate inclusive values public recognition—will help

companies establish cultures that reinforce what they stand for. If there is a misalignment between your organization's values and the behaviors your employees exhibit, then your accountability structure is likely misaligned and needs to be rethought.

How will companies know if their diversity and inclusion programs are actually helping Black employees? In what ways should they collect feedback and measure progress?

Asking employees how things are going is a good first step. To gain deeper insights, however, companies should take the bold step of analyzing employee engagement data by race and ethnicity. This is not often done because of the fear of what might be discovered, and if organizations don't look at their data by subgroup, they can easily claim that they have no knowledge of subgroup differences. Failure to measure engagement by subgroup can be perceived by Black employees, and other racial or ethnic minorities, as disinterest in truly understanding the way their lived experience may diverge from others in the organization. This data should be shared and discussed internally. Where divergences in experience

■ It is the organization's job to weave their values into the processes and practices that reinforce company culture.

exist, companies must take a deep dive to understand and resolve the source of the discrepancy.

Where do you see the biggest disconnects between research and practice? And where have you seen the most promising connections?

In organizations, the degree to which we promote awareness of our unconscious biases is often held up as the solution to all the challenges that accompany diversity and inclusion efforts. But in reality, research shows that awareness can actually increase the problematic behavior we are trying to change. This is because if we know that everyone is biased—which we are—we become less inclined to work against our own biases. We do what others do.

You've been working in inclusion for a long time. What's changed since you started? What remains stubbornly the same? And what makes you the most optimistic about the future?

More organizations recognize that they have a problem with inclusion and are more committed to making changes than they were 20 years ago. I'm seeing more

companies devote resources to forming diversity and inclusion programs, and hiring professionals to spearhead those efforts. There are also communities of practitioners and academics working together to identify and test best practices, whereas before, researchers and those responsible for implementing solutions rarely talked to one another, and they certainly didn't work collaboratively on challenges.

But many organizations still want quick fixes. They are impatient for better outcomes and sometimes take shortcuts. Today, certain programs still focus on "fixing" Black employees as opposed to fixing organizational biases. Others showcase one-off diversity and inclusion efforts, such as showy, expensive conferences with a diverse array of speakers, yet fail to yield sustainable gains for Black employees because they don't actually examine the day-to-day practices that may undermine Black employee advancement. In addition, people remain concerned about how diversity and inclusion efforts will affect their career outcomes, and outcomes of others like themselves, if those who are historically underrepresented are given new forms of access

and more developmental support.

If you had one message for other diversity and inclusion executives, what would it be?

Moving the needle on inclusion is hard. We are asking individuals to do things differently when they feel like they are already overwhelmed. Successful efforts require a deep commitment to sustained effort and offers of assistance to employees in changing their behaviors. Big wins will come from interrogating seemingly mundane practices and processes, and holding managers and leaders accountable for progress toward your organization's aspirations.

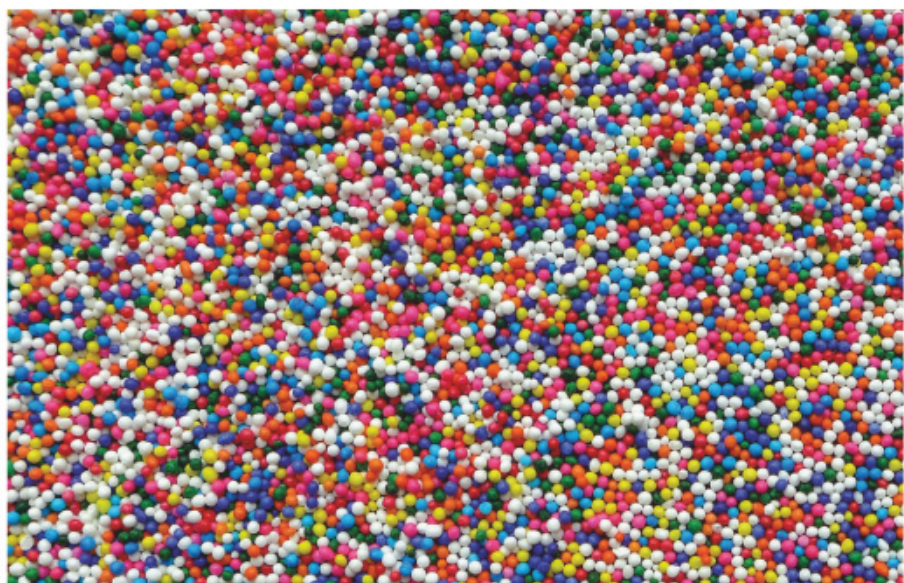
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Dr. Thomas-Hunt joined Airbnb as head of global diversity and belonging. She serves on the company's executive team and leads the strategy and execution of the global internal diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging programs.

Paige Cohen is a senior associate editor and **Gretchen Gavett** is a senior editor at Harvard Business Review.



5. Why Your Diversity Program May Be Helping Women but Not Minorities (or Vice Versa)

→ by EVAN APFELBAUM

WHEN IT COMES to issues of race, gender, and diversity in organizations, researchers have revealed the problems in detail. But they haven't explored what organizations can do to fix those problems and create the conditions in which stigmatized groups can reach their potential and succeed. That's why my collaborators—Nicole Stephens at the Kellogg School of Management and Ray Rea-

gans at MIT Sloan School of Management—and I decided to study what organizations can do to increase traditionally stigmatized groups' performance and persistence, and curb the disproportionately high rates at which they leave jobs.

One tool at any organization's disposal is the way its leaders choose to talk (or not talk) about diversity and differences—what we call

their diversity approach. Diversity approaches are important because they provide employees with a framework for thinking about group differences in the workplace and how they should respond to them. We first studied the public diversity statements of 151 big law firms in the U.S. to understand the relationship between how organizations talk about diversity and the rates of attrition of associate-level women and racial-minority attorneys at these firms. We assumed that how firms talked about diversity in their statements was a rough proxy for their firm's approach to diversity more generally.

Two findings were particularly intriguing. First, diversity statements seek to appeal to the stigmatized groups they target in two fundamentally different ways. One appeal is to differences and how differences are important. We call this the "value in difference" approach. For example, a value-in-difference approach advocates for increasing awareness of differences and bias, and signals the organization's belief that these differences not only improve employees' experiences in the workplace but also advance the firm's bottom-line goals. The other approach

is an appeal to equality and fairness irrespective of differences. We call this the "value in equality" approach. For example, a value-in-equality approach affirms that differences will not be an obstacle to career opportunities and advancement, and that all employees will be judged equally and fairly on the basis of their skills, qualifications, and effort.

The second key finding was that there was no evidence that one of these two approaches was more effective than the other overall. But the effectiveness of each approach (in this case, its association with reduced rates of attrition) depended on whether we looked at women or racial minorities.

In fact, our data suggested not only that women and racial minorities responded differently to these two diversity approaches but that each group responded in virtually the opposite way. The more firms emphasized the value-in-difference approach, the lower the rates of attrition among women, whereas the more firms emphasized the value-in-equality approach, the lower the rates of attrition among racial minorities.

What might explain these divergent responses to the same statements? We think one major factor is the differ-

■ No approach to talking about differences and diversity will work uniformly well across groups and contexts.

ence in numerical representation of women and racial minorities in these firms (and in most professional settings). Although women and racial minorities are often considered under the same umbrella of stigmatized groups, in the U.S., white women often comprise close to 40% of all employees in professional settings, whereas Black women and men, by contrast, rarely comprise more than 5% of employees in these same settings. The key to understanding our results, we believe, is appreciating that the difference in the relative size of these groups influences how concerned they are with “sticking out” as representatives of their group. While the value-in-difference approach may energize groups like white women, who are represented in moderate numbers—helping affirm the importance of their different backgrounds and perspectives to the firm—the very same message may ironically undermine groups who are represented in very small numbers, like Black women and men. Even well-intentioned efforts to “value differences” may only fuel concerns among Black women and men that others will think their position, promotion, or positive evaluation is due to their race

rather than their qualifications or competence. The value-in-equality approach is more effective for groups in very small numbers as it makes them feel less distinct from others while affirming a commitment to equal and fair access to opportunities.

If numerical representation is really the factor that shapes what is desirable and effective in a diversity approach, then what would happen if Black women and men made up 40% of the firm? Or if white women were 5% of the firm? We ran a controlled experiment with white and Black professionals to test these very questions. We asked these professionals to review web content from the perspective of an employee who had earned a spot in an elite consulting firm. Half of these professionals were told that they were part of a group that constituted 5% of the firm, whereas the other half were told that they were part of a group that constituted 40% of the firm. We then presented them with either a prototypical value-in-difference or value-in-equality approach and measured their performance and persistence on a challenging cognitive task. What we found is that when professionals believed they were part of the 5% group, the value-in-equality

approach led to greater performance and persistence than the value-in-difference approach—regardless of whether they were white women or Black. When professionals believed they were part of the 40% group, we saw the reverse pattern: The value-in-difference approach led to greater performance and persistence than the value-in-equality approach—regardless of their race or gender. This evidence suggests that numbers play a critical role in determining which diversity approach is best.

What does this all mean? For one, I think it means that no approach to talking about differences and diversity will work uniformly well across groups and contexts. Before organizations decide to focus on the value in difference or equality, they should first consider *who* they are targeting, and how numerical representation and corresponding concerns may shape their responses.

One big practical challenge raised by this work is what an organization should do if it wants to improve the situation for both women and minority groups. Is it possible to emphasize the value in both difference *and* equality?

We found some evidence that the positive relationships we observed (between more

focus on value in difference and less on female attrition, and between more focus on value in equality and less on minority attrition) disappear in firms that try to emphasize both approaches. Understanding why this is the case will require more study, but it seems logical that saying that you care about differences and think they are important—and at the same time, you don’t—could both dilute the broader message and come across as inauthentic.

This research suggests a way to align traditional business objectives of boosting performance and stemming turnover with the goal of helping all groups have the same opportunities to succeed.

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6. A Data-Driven Approach to Hiring More-Diverse Talent

→ by SANDY CROSS and PORTER BRASWELL

WITHIN 25 YEARS, people of color are projected to be a majority in the U.S. As this key demographic rapidly expands, businesses of all sizes across America are realizing the need to hire diverse talent to develop products, services, and experiences for a changing population. Further,

research shows that companies that have more-diverse workforces outperform and outinnovate those that don't. According to a 2018 McKinsey report, companies in the top quartile for workforce diversity are 33% more likely to financially outperform their less-diverse counterparts.

But while companies understand why they need to have a more diverse workforce, many aren't sure how to make it happen. The PGA of America was one, and it faced challenging public perceptions. Golf is often viewed as a primarily white sport, which makes it difficult to recruit from underrepresented communities. Historically, there have been many barriers to entry for people of color interested in golf, including financial hurdles to enter training and acquiring equipment. While the PGA of America has instituted programs geared toward attracting diverse talent (like

the PGA WORKS program, which actively recruits people from diverse backgrounds to apply for fellowships and other pathways of entry), there's still more work to be done.

Recently, the PGA decided to partner with Jopwell, a career advancement platform for Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals. The partnership is one of many the PGA uses to identify new strategic ways to engage, recruit, and retain talent from underrepresented communities by having an authentic voice in these same communities.

What the PGA learned is in some ways unique to golf. But there are plenty of lessons for other companies looking to move from wanting to be more inclusive and diverse to actually hiring employees from diverse backgrounds.

To Create Change, Start with Data

After being commissioned by the PGA, Jopwell collected direct feedback from its community on their perceptions of the golf industry, including barriers to entry and career opportunities within it. (Jopwell's community is made up of Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals who have

■ Gathering actual data points motivates, validates, or disproves decision-makers and empowers leaders to take action.

a profile on Jopwell.com and have opted in to receive Jopwell's communications.) Jopwell segmented the community members they polled on the basis of their self-selected interest in sports, finance, and marketing. (Jopwell offered 10 \$100 gift cards as incentives for the 476 survey participants.)

The data found that there is more of a lack of awareness about career opportunities in the PGA of America than a lack of interest in golf. This was encouraging, as it validated the PGA of America's ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the availability of these roles.

Key findings include:

- When respondents were asked to name the main obstacles to why they have not applied for jobs in the golf industry, the aforementioned lack of awareness (27%) and access to contacts in the industry (26%) were cited as the top two reasons.
- While two-thirds of respondents believed the golf industry is not diverse or inclusive, the majority of them also felt that a career in golf could be enjoyable, cool, and rewarding.
- The PGA of America also discovered they could do more to educate people about available opportunities. When

asked why they didn't apply, 51% of respondents said they believed a background in golf or business was needed, and 76% were unaware of career opportunities with the PGA of America.

- However, once it was explicitly stated that the PGA of America wants to recruit professionals from various backgrounds, the likelihood of applying went up from 46% to 64%.

Regardless of whether results of surveys like this are surprising or expected, having accurate data is fundamental to any inclusion and diversity effort. Many people anecdotally have a hunch about what the barriers that prevent diverse candidates from applying are, but gathering actual data points motivates, validates, or disproves decision-makers and empowers leaders to take action. Many other companies are facing similar challenges in modernizing and diversifying their workforces and would benefit from taking the time to hear from the candidates they're trying to reach.

Then Translate Data into Action

Using these findings, the PGA of America and Jopwell developed a plan of action to lay the foundation for lasting

changes around hiring. Here are the three key steps:

STEP 1

Improve accessibility. It's important for companies to consider barriers to entry and what can be done to break them down. They must take steps to ensure diverse candidates are part of the pipeline of consideration for new hires. To address these issues, the PGA of America is now:

- Featuring PGA WORKS fellowships, scholarships, and career exploration events—as well as PGA of America Headquarters internship and full-time career opportunities—more prominently on its digital and social media platforms
- Centralizing job postings on one website rather than having them scattered across a variety of web pages based on the focus of the position
- Dedicating resources to growing networks and reaching the community where it is looking for jobs (Jopwell, Black Enterprise, LinkedIn, and so forth)

STEP 2

Increase awareness. After ensuring that job opportunities are accessible and distributed widely, the PGA also asked itself: What are we doing to educate di-

verse candidates about the opportunities available? Are we reaching this community where they are in ways that speak to them authentically? Resulting actions include:

- Using PGA of America and PGA WORKS social media channels to tell the stories of current diverse employees and PGA members and how they have navigated their careers
- Engaging in strategic partnerships with major multimedia partners, like *Black Enterprise* and *Sports Business Journal*, who have a strong presence in the traditionally unengaged golf communities
- Ensuring there are diverse faces and vocal champions of diversity at the top leadership levels
- Increasing visual representation of people of color in golf careers. For example, *Golf: The Jopwell PGA Collection*, an album of authentic stock photos, was developed as a resource both the PGA of America and the general public could use to highlight the existing diversity in the game and business of golf and has now received more than 19 million views.
- Attending career fairs and highlighting the fastest-growing job areas within the industry to diverse audiences
- Creating high-visibility events, such as the PGA WORKS Collegiate Championship, where each year approximately 200 student athletes from historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other institutions serving underrepresented populations compete.



Athletes can also explore internship and entry-level employment opportunities with the golf industry's leading employers at a career expo before play begins.

STEP 3

Create systems of accountability. Systems and processes must be put in place to help change a culture. For example, if you get a wave of applicants, do you have the right interview channels set up to quickly move them along? If you say you are open to candidates without a background in golf, does everyone interviewing the candidates know that? Some steps to take:

- Put systems in place that help propel candidates through the application funnel, such as fixed candidate-review timelines and a process for pivoting candidates to other appropriate open roles.
- Understand who the key stakeholders for decision-making in the hiring process are and secure buy-in for diversity recruitment from the top using data.
- Set interview and top-of-funnel goals for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Make sure those goals are shared throughout the company and that people are working toward them together.

- Share, track, and report progress toward goals with hiring managers.

The PGA of America and Jopwell both understand that change doesn't happen overnight. Yet, armed with the right data, new ideas, and a plan for steps to take, the two organizations are excited to continue breaking down barriers to entry and inviting people of all backgrounds to explore opportunities in the golf industry. We hope the lessons learned through our data and the action items outlined can help other companies that are attempting to attract diverse talent, too.

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Sandy Cross has been a member of the PGA of America team since 1996. She is currently the chief people officer and is charged with enhancing a values-based culture. Cross also oversees the Human Resources and Inclusion and Diversity departments. **Porter Braswell** is the CEO and co-founder of Jopwell, the leading career advancement platform for Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals. Launched in 2015 with fellow former Wall Street analyst Ryan Williams, Jopwell has facilitated tens of thousands of connections between its community and 250+ partner companies across dozens of industries.



7. The Unintended Consequences of Diversity Statements

→ by SONIA KANG, KATHERINE DECELLES, ANDRÁS TILCSIK, and SORA JUN

PRO-DIVERSITY MESSAGES are everywhere, whether you're searching for a job, playing soccer, or watching the Oscars. Their point is simple: Diversity is good, and we need more of it. In the business world, for example, we know that more-diverse groups tend to be more inno-

vative, creative, hardworking, and better at solving problems. Yet despite the proliferation of interest in diversity and costly initiatives aimed at increasing it, discrimination continues to be a major problem in the labor market.

In trying to address discrimination, many organiza-



tions now explicitly advertise their dedication to diversity, identifying themselves as “equal opportunity” or “diversity friendly” employers. The thinking, presumably, is that such statements will increase the diversity of their applicant pool and ultimately of their workforce. We know a lot about how effective these diversity statements are, and unfortunately the answer is “not very.” They can even backfire by making organizations less likely to notice discrimination.

On the other hand, we know relatively little about the steps minority job seekers are taking to avoid anticipated discrimination. One way racial minorities may be trying to avoid discrimination is via a practice called *résumé whitening* (concealing or downplaying racial cues on a job application to increase the chance of getting a callback for an interview). *Résumé whitening* goes hand in hand with the desire to “tone down” or “downplay” race and to maintain a relatively “raceless” workplace identity.

To address this gap, we conducted three studies published in *Administrative Science Quarterly* to learn more about whitening and how it is influenced by organizational diversity

statements—and how organizations respond to whitening.

In our first study, we interviewed Black and Asian university students who were actively searching for jobs or internships. Roughly one-third of our sample had engaged in whitening, and two-thirds knew someone else who had. The main areas where this whitening occurred were with names (for example, using a “white” first name such as Jenn instead of an Asian first name such as Jing) and descriptions of experience (for example, dropping “Black” when listing membership in the Black Engineering Students’ Association). Among the motivations interviewees mentioned for whitening, the main one was to tone down their race to avoid discrimination. Importantly, interviewees indicated that they whitened less or not at all when applying to jobs for employers that explicitly state that they value diversity.

In our second study, we tested whether minorities do indeed whiten less when applying for jobs that include pro-diversity statements. We tested this by creating job ads that did or did not mention diversity, asking half of the participants to craft résumés for the pro-diversity jobs and half to craft résumés for the jobs that did not mention

diversity. We then compared the résumés participants created during the experiment with the full résumés they submitted to us beforehand. Sure enough, participants were half as likely to whiten their résumés when job ads included pro-diversity statements.

Finally, we wanted to examine the consequences of this *résumé whitening* for employment decisions. We created realistic résumés for Black and Asian applicants that varied in how much racial information was apparent. We sent these résumés out to 1,600 entry-level jobs posted on job search websites across 16 metropolitan areas in the U.S. Critically, half of these job ads mentioned valuing diversity and the other half did not, which allowed us to see whether diversity statements actually make a difference when it comes to hiring decisions. We created e-mail accounts and phone numbers for our applicants and observed how many callbacks they received.

We found that the whitened versions of both the Black and Asian résumés were more than twice as likely to result in a callback as unwhitened résumés, even though the listed qualifications were identical—in line with other studies showing

lower callback rates for minority applicants. Most important, the discrimination against unwhitened résumés was no smaller for purportedly pro-diversity employers than for employers that didn’t mention diversity in their job ad.

A critical implication of our studies is that to the extent that pro-diversity statements encourage job applicants to let their guard down and disclose more racial information, these statements may be doing more harm than good. If appeals to diversity encourage applicants to reveal racial cues to an organization that has not adequately addressed discriminatory hiring practices, then pro-diversity statements may effectively expose minorities to greater discrimination. Unless the biased evaluation of racial minorities in this critical step for entry into the labor market is addressed, pro-diversity statements may have the exact opposite of their intended effect.

So where do we go from here? Employers need to acknowledge that discrimination still exists and that bias is hardwired into the system. When we are asked to process large amounts of information quickly, cognitive biases such as prejudice and stereotyping tend to prevail. We need

■ Pro-diversity statements may have the exact opposite of their intended effect.

innovations in recruitment to disrupt the bias that exists in human brains. Technology may be able to help with this, as can policies such as blind recruitment, where information that could be a clue to any biasing characteristic including race, age, gender, or social class is removed from résumés before they reach the hands of hiring managers. Humans have limited cognitive capacity and naturally rely on shortcuts, so why not provide only the information relevant to the hiring decision?

Minority job seekers reading this might wonder whether they, too, should whiten their résumés, given that it seems to result in more callbacks. Although our results do indicate that whitening can lead to higher callback rates, it is important to remember that it can also mask an applicant's potential value to a firm. Some of our participants reported deleting prestigious scholarships or involvement in nationally recognized professional societies because these achievements highlighted their racial identities. Masking such accomplishments hides the full value that applicants bring to a job. The only way to get the most from our workforce is for employers and policy makers to implement

real initiatives that thoroughly combat biased hiring practices. Moreover, résumé whitening won't prevent employers from discriminating against job seekers during the interview process or against new hires once they get in the door.

Organizations that put diversity initiatives into place do so with good intentions. They recognize that discrimination is a problem and that embracing diversity has substantial social and economic value. Simply advertising oneself as an equal-opportunity or diversity-friendly employer, however, does not solve the underlying problem of discrimination. Pro-diversity statements may give you a more diverse applicant pool, but it takes more to make workplaces truly fair and inclusive. ☹

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HOW YOU CAN
BE ANTI-RACIST

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We Just Can't Handle Diversity

A research roundup

→ by LISA BURRELL

IT'S HARD TO ARGUE with the benefits of diversity, given the decades' worth of studies showing that a diverse workforce measurably improves decision making, problem solving, creativity, innovation, and flexibility.

Most of us also believe that hiring, development, and compensation decisions should come down to who deserves what. Although the two ideas don't seem contradictory, they're tough to reconcile in practice. Cognitive roadblocks keep getting in the way.







The Trouble with Merit

While merit sounds like an easy, obvious filter for talent decisions, it's anything but. We believe we know good talent when we see it, yet we usually don't—we're terrible at evaluating people objectively. That's why orchestras started holding blind auditions decades ago. It's why today algorithms often make smarter hires than people do. It's why so many companies are searching for alternatives to traditional performance reviews. Even (and especially) when leaders proclaim a commitment to fairness in their organizations, stereotypes cause them to evaluate and treat equal performers differently, as Emilio Castilla, of MIT, and Stephen Benard, of Indiana University, have demonstrated in their well-known research on the "paradox of meritocracy."

What's tripping us up? Robert H. Frank, a Cornell economist and the author of *Success and Luck*, provides one explanation: We just don't see the large role that chance events play in people's life trajectories. If someone lands a great job and makes lots of money, we interpret those outcomes as evidence of smarts and hard work. (We look at our own lives the same way.) As for those who don't thrive? Well, we tell ourselves, maybe they've caught a bad break here and there, but they could turn things around if they tugged on their bootstraps a bit harder.

If those in power think this world is basically fair and just, they won't even recognize—much less worry about—systemic unfairness. Frank talks about inequity mostly in socioeconomic terms, but the implications for under-represented demographic groups are

clear. He dips in and out of the abundant social science findings suggesting that good fortune accounts for a great deal of success, and that we're hell-bent on believing otherwise. Framing effects, or our immediate points of reference (living in suburbia or attending a posh school, for instance), shape how we perceive haves and have-nots in the wider world. Hindsight bias causes us to believe that random events are predictable and to manufacture explanations for the inevitability of our achievements. And winner-take-all markets—where "rewards tend to be highly concentrated in the hands of a few top performers"—intensify the consequences of our cognitive shortcuts.

Of course, believing that merit will be justly rewarded can come in handy for individuals. As Frank notes, it's easier to muster the energy to overcome obstacles if you feel you're on a well-earned, reasonably certain path to high achievement and if you have an inflated sense of your own abilities. But, he says, this mindset also keeps people from investing in public solutions that expand the economic pie for everyone. Perhaps the biggest reason we cling to it is that when it's challenged, we feel attacked—as if our talent and effort are being dismissed. Talent and effort matter quite a bit, Frank acknowledges. But very often they're not enough to ensure success. Changes in public policy and a dose of gratitude can help rectify inequities, he says—but we're a far cry from living and working in a meritocracy, because our view of merit is so flawed.

In her book *Pedigree*, Lauren Rivera, of Northwestern University, also examines how we understand and evaluate

merit and finds it to be a moving target. But where Frank applies a "macro" lens to society, Rivera looks specifically at how students from elite schools and backgrounds get elite jobs—and at how employers judge the people applying for those positions.

She studied hiring committees at professional services firms that believed they were ensuring rigor and counteracting bias through group discussions of job candidates from the school-recruitment pipeline. But those conversations actually dampened diversity by giving negative racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes greater sway over decisions—particularly "in ambiguous situations, where the quality of a candidate [was] not clear." In those cases, Rivera points out, "stereotypes served as an unconscious navigational system, guiding interviewers' attention to where they should focus and look for clues in order to figure out if the candidate did or did not have the right stuff." This gave evaluators "a common lens and shared language" when they didn't immediately agree on someone's value to the organization.

One consulting firm invited Rivera to sit in at various points in the selection process—first during "calibrations," or discussions between pairs of interviewers about first-round candidates, and then during the group discussions in later rounds. At each stage she consistently found that evaluators had little or nothing to say about the "rock stars" or the "rejects." They deliberated mainly about candidates in the middle, which is where stereotypes about women and minorities came into play.

■ ■ We believe we know good talent when we see it, yet we usually don't—we're terrible at evaluating people objectively.

In the calibrations, the most common criteria for moving candidates from the middle to either the “yes” or the “no” pile were communication skills (referred to as “polish”), analysis of a sample business case, the math used to support that analysis, and cultural fit. But the interviewers weighed and judged those criteria differently depending on the race, ethnicity, or gender of the candidates. For example, Black and Hispanic men were often seen as lacking polish and moved to the reject pile, even when they were strong in other areas, whereas white men who lacked polish were deemed coachable and kept in the running. A similar pattern emerged among men who appeared shy, nervous, or understated: Non-whites were rejected for being unassertive, but in whites, modesty was seen as a virtue. Among candidates who made minor mistakes in math, women were rejected for not having the right skills, and men were given a pass—interviewers assumed they were having an “off” day. (See “Why Diversity Programs Fail,” in this issue.)

Somewhat predictably, when discussing final decisions, evaluators shifted their focus away from the candidates’ performance and toward personal chemistry and gut instinct—their “feel” for people took over. They barely discussed technical skill toward the end unless they were evaluating women, particularly those in banking.

Nodding to the sociologist Randall Collins’s argument that “emotion is a critical basis of social sorting, selection, and stratification,” Rivera found that candidates in the “maybe” pool ultimately needed a passionate champion

on the hiring committee in order to receive an offer. And evaluators advocated most fervently for people who were most like them. Perhaps because women and minorities were more vulnerable in their status at the firm, they championed fewer people than white men did—they chose their battles, as one female evaluator put it. (There’s something to that reluctance. As Stefanie Johnson and David Hekman, of the University of Colorado, have found in their field and lab research, women and minorities who actively push for diversity are punished by their organizations—they get lower performance ratings than those who don’t. Men who promote diversity don’t suffer the same penalty.)

So, with white men doing most of the championing and having the greatest influence during deliberations, candidates’ similarities to interviewers tilted the playing field heavily in favor of “white, affluent, athletic graduates of super-elite institutions.” Similarity to evaluators who deviated from that norm sometimes helped women or minorities land a role—but those were isolated cases.

The Trouble with Diversity

As Rivera suggests, the hiring conversations at the consulting firm were ultimately more about reaching consensus than about vetting people accurately. To fix that kind of conceptual problem, it’s necessary to sort out (at least somewhat objectively) what constitutes merit in a given context. Assuming that’s possible, and that we can send our biases packing (a gigantic *if* when we consider how



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

Research shows that diversity improves decision making, problem solving, creativity, and innovation. Yet when companies hire, all too often interviewers prefer people similar to them or focus on gut instinct more than candidates’ performance.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Our cognitive biases lead us astray in a number of ways: We believe that work is a meritocracy. We let stereotypes influence our choices. We assess hiring criteria differently depending on someone’s race, gender, or ethnicity. We make hiring decisions about reaching consensus rather than vetting people accurately. And while white men who promote diversity don’t face backlash for it, women and minorities who do so are punished.

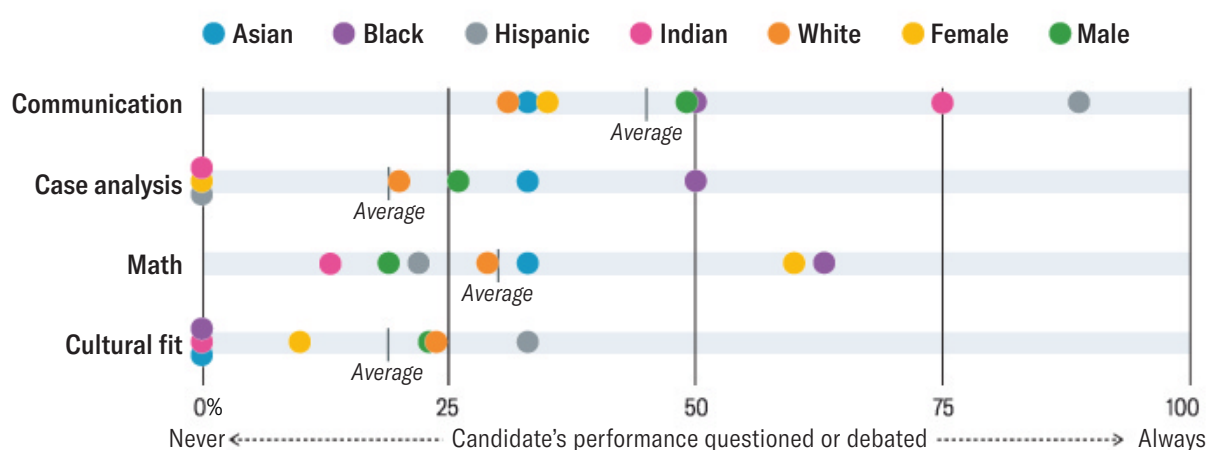
THE SOLUTION

Changing how our brains work is difficult, but we can mitigate bias by changing our decision-making systems. Carefully structuring how we present information can help us separate opinion from data—and rely on the latter.



Inconsistent Levels of Scrutiny

When Northwestern professor Lauren Rivera sat in on one firm's "calibrations" (interviewers' discussions about first-round job candidates), she found remarkable discrepancies linked to race, ethnicity, and gender. This chart shows the demographic breakdown of 73 candidates whose performance was questioned or debated in four critical areas: communication skills ("polish"), sample business case analysis, math, and cultural fit.



Source: *Pedigree* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

stubborn they are), will diversity naturally follow?

That's difficult to say, since we don't agree on how to define it. According to one Deloitte study, Millennials think of diversity and inclusion as valuing open participation by employees with different perspectives and personalities. In contrast, older workers think of it as equitable representation and assimilation of people from different demographic groups.

Even if we stick with the second, more traditional definition, how can we set goals and track our progress? As Ashleigh Shelby Rosette, of Duke University, pointed out at Wharton's 2016 People Analytics Conference, we tend to boil things down into tidy dichotomies—male/female, white/Black, dominant/minority,

and so on. But reality is a lot messier than that. No one is just female, or just Black, or just Muslim. Each person is "a whole package of interlocking attributes," Rosette said, and that's a lot harder to analyze and balance in an organization.

Further complicating matters, rhetorical framing skews how people perceive power. Rosette and her colleague Leigh Plunkett Tost, of the University of Michigan, discussed this dynamic in their *Psychological Science* article "Perceiving Social Inequity." In general, describing inequities as privileges for certain groups (rather than disadvantages for others) gets our defenses up. Much like the notion of dumb luck that Frank writes about, it damages our self-image—haven't we *earned* what we've got?—and makes us not want to see or rectify the problem.

Plus, power is variable for members of any group. People can have high status on some social-hierarchy dimensions but low status on others. That mix, Rosette and Tost's research shows, may help individuals recognize the privileges they enjoy as part of a dominant group, as long as they also believe they've experienced disadvantages as members of other, subordinate groups (and thus can identify with people who feel disadvantaged in comparison with them). White women overall, for instance, are more likely than white men to view themselves as beneficiaries of racial privilege; they get it because they, too, have had to deal with discrimination.

Senior leaders need to recognize their organizations' inequities—probably more than anyone else, since they have the power to make changes. But once they've climbed to their positions, they usually lose sight of what they had to overcome to get there. As a result, Rosette and Tost find, "they lack the motivation and perspective to actively consider the advantages that dominant-group members experience." This is especially true of successful white women, who "reported [even] lower perceptions of white privilege than did highly successful white men." It's fascinating that their encounters with sexism don't help them identify racial advantage after they've gotten ahead. Perhaps, the authors suggest, their hard-earned status feels so tenuous that they reflexively tighten their grip.

Beyond murkily defined concepts and somewhat defensive motivations, we have an even-higher-level conceptual obstacle to overcome: our bias against diversity itself. Recent

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research by Ohio State University's Robert Lount Jr. and colleagues (Oliver Sheldon, of Rutgers; Floor Rink, of Groningen; and Katherine Phillips, of Columbia) shows that we assume diversity will spark interpersonal conflict. Participants in a series of experiments all read, watched, or listened to the exact same conversations among various groups. They consistently perceived the all-Black or all-white groups as more harmonious than those with a combination of Blacks and whites.

If we expect people to behave less constructively when they're in diverse organizations or teams, how do we interpret and reward their actual performance? Under the influence of those flawed expectations? Quite possibly.

So, Is It Hopeless?

According to the renowned behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman, trying to outsmart bias at the individual level is a bit of a fool's errand, even with training. We are fundamentally overconfident, he says, so we make quick interpretations and automatic judgments. But organizations think and move much more slowly. They actually stand a chance of improving decision making.

Research by John Beshears and Francesca Gino, of Harvard Business School, supports that line of thought. As they have written in HBR, "It's extraordinarily difficult to rewire the human brain," but we can "alter the environment in which decisions are made." This approach—known as choice architecture—involves mitigating biases, not reversing them, and Beshears and Gino have found that it can lead to better outcomes in a

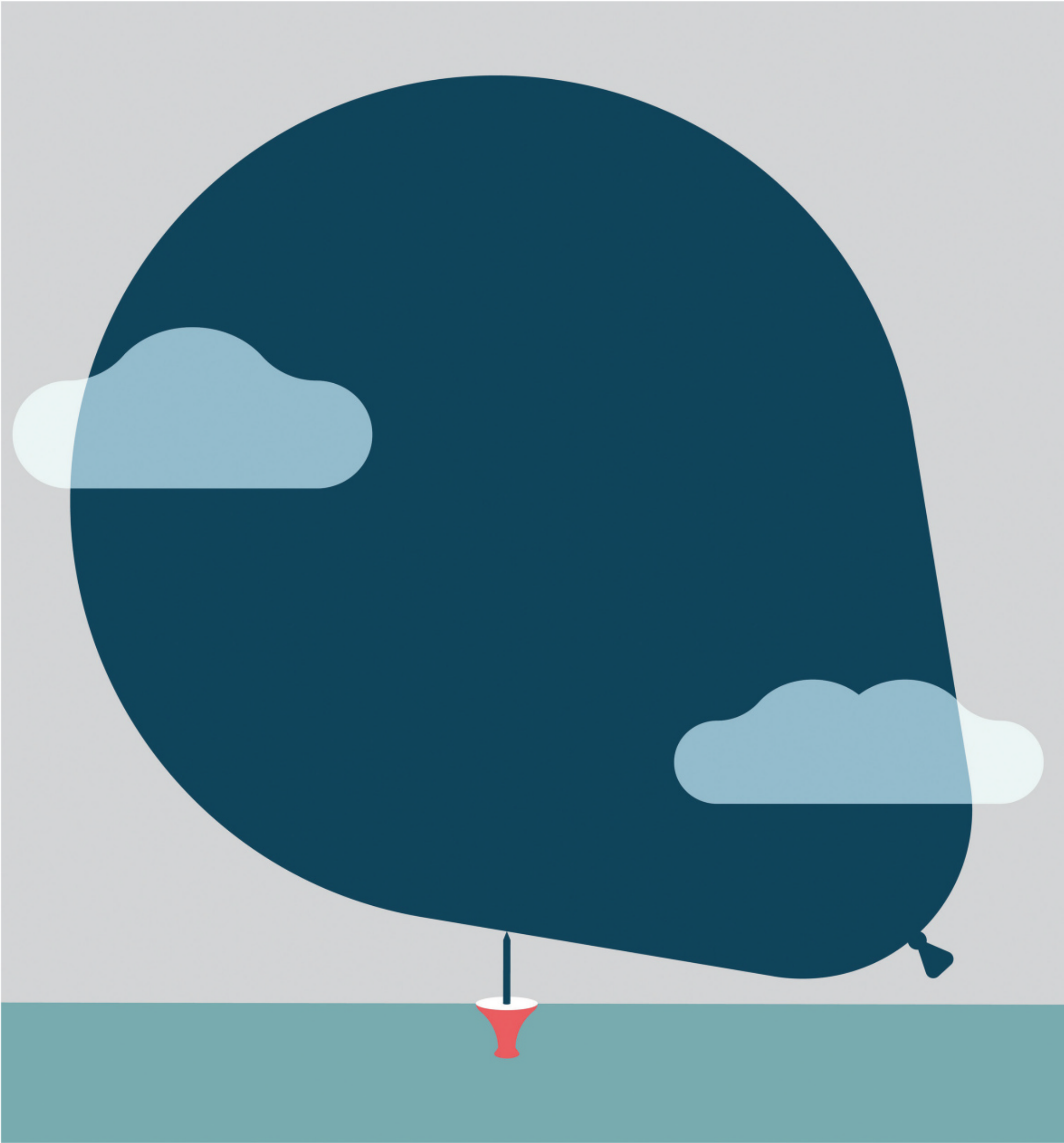
wide range of situations. The idea is to deliberately structure how you present information and options: You don't take away individuals' right to decide or tell them what they should do. You just make it easier for them to reach more-rational decisions.

There's still an element of manipulation here: The organization sets the stage for certain kinds of choices. But that brings us back to what most of us can agree on, at least in the abstract: Diversity improves performance, and people who apply themselves and do good work should be treated fairly.

If the members of an organization could get behind those broad ideas, would it bother them that they were being nudged to do what they wanted to do anyway? It might—and that would be another cognitive roadblock to clear. ☹

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How the Best Bosses Interrupt Bias on Their Teams

Strategies to foster equity and inclusion

→ by JOAN C. WILLIAMS and SKY MIHAYLO

COMPANIES SPEND MILLIONS on antibias training each year. The goal is to create workforces that are more inclusive, and thereby more innovative and more effective. Studies show that well-managed diverse groups outperform homogeneous ones and are more committed, have higher collective intelligence, and are better at making decisions and solving problems. But research also shows that bias prevention programs rarely deliver. And some companies don't invest in them at all. So how can you, as an individual leader, make sure your team is including and making the most of diverse voices? Can one person fix what an entire organization can't?

Although bias itself is devilishly hard to eliminate, it is not as difficult to

interrupt. In the decades we've spent researching and advising people on how to build and manage diverse work groups, we've identified ways that managers can counter bias without spending a lot of time—or political capital.

The first step is to understand the four distinct ways bias plays out in everyday work interactions: (1) *Prove it again*: Some groups have to prove themselves more than others do. (2) *Tightrope*: A narrower range of behaviors is accepted from some groups than from others. (3) *Maternal wall*: Women with children see their commitment and competence questioned or face disapproval for being too career focused. (4) *Tug-of-war*: Disadvantaged groups find themselves pitted against one another because of



differing strategies for assimilating—or refusing to do so.

The second step is to recognize when and where these forms of bias arise day-to-day. In the absence of an organizational directive, it's easy to let them go unaddressed. That's a mistake. You can't be a great manager without becoming a *bias interrupter*. Here's how to do it.

Picking Your People

Bias in hiring has been extensively documented. In one study, “Jamal” needed eight more years of experience than “Greg” to be seen as equally qualified. Another found that men from elite backgrounds were called back for interviews more than 12 times as often as identical candidates from non-elite backgrounds. Other studies have found that women, LGBT+ candidates, people with disabilities, women in headscarves, and older people are less likely to be hired than their peers.

Fairness in hiring is only the first step toward achieving diversity, but it's an important one. Here are four simple actions that will yield the best candidates by eliminating artificial advantages:

1. Insist on a diverse pool. Whether you're working with recruiters or doing the hiring yourself, make it clear from the outset that you want true diversity, not just one female or minority candidate. Research shows that the odds of hiring a woman are 79 times as great if at least two women are in the finalist pool, while the odds of hiring a nonwhite candidate are 194 times as great with at least two finalist minority applicants. For example, when Kori Carew launched

the Shook Scholars Institute at Shook, Hardy & Bacon, she designed it to bring a diverse mix of students into the law firm and offered career development and mentoring that prompted many of them to apply for summer associate positions.

2. Establish objective criteria, define “culture fit,” and demand accountability. Implicit biases around culture fit often lead to homogeneity. Too often it comes down to shared backgrounds and interests that out-groups, especially first-generation professionals, won't have. That's why it's important to clarify objective criteria for any open role and to rate all applicants using the same rubric. When one insurance company began hiring in this way, it ended up offering jobs to 46% more minority candidates than before. Even if your organization doesn't mandate this approach, ensure that everyone on your team takes it. Write down the specific qualifications required for a particular position so that everyone can focus on them when reviewing résumés and conducting interviews. For example, when Alicia Powell was managing chief counsel at PNC Bank, she made a point of listing the qualities that would make new team members successful in their roles: proactive in managing risk, self-disciplined, patient, customer focused, and independent. Powell shared this information with the rest of her team and candidates, ensuring that everyone was on the same page. You should hold people accountable in the same way. Waive criteria rarely, and require an explanation for those exceptions; then keep track of long-term waiving trends.

Research shows that objective rules tend to be applied rigorously to out-groups but leniently to in-groups.

3. Limit referral hiring. If your organization is homogeneous, hiring from within or from employees' social networks will only perpetuate that. So reach out to women and minority groups. Google partners with historically Black colleges such as Spelman and Florida A&M University and with Hispanic-serving institutions such as New Mexico State and the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez. As an individual leader, you can work with the same organizations or recruit from similar ones in your industry or local community.

4. Structure interviews with skills-based questions. Ask every person interviewed the same questions and make sure that each question directly relates to the desired knowledge and skills you've outlined. Rate the answers immediately—that will allow you to compare candidates fairly on a preestablished rubric and prevent favoritism. You should also use skills assessments: Rather than ask “How comfortable are you with Excel?” say “Here's a data set. How would you find out X?” For more-complex skills, such as project management, pose a problem or a task that candidates are likely to encounter on the job and ask them to describe in detail how they would handle it.

Managing Day-to-Day

Even good leaders sometimes fall into bad habits when it comes to the daily

management of their teams. Women report doing about 20% more “office housework,” on average, than their white male counterparts, whether it’s literal housework (arranging for lunch or cleaning up after a meeting), administrative tasks (finding a place to meet or prepping a PowerPoint), emotional labor (“He’s upset—can you fix it?”), or undervalued work (mentoring summer interns). This is especially true in high-status, high-stakes workplaces. Women engineers report a “worker bee” expectation at higher rates than white men do, and women of color report it at higher rates than white women do. Meanwhile, glamour work that leads to networking and promotion opportunities, such as project leadership and presentations, goes disproportionately to white men. When the consultancy GapJumpers analyzed the performance reviews of a tech company client, it found that women employees were 42% more likely than their male colleagues to be limited to lower-impact projects; as a result, far fewer of them rose to more-senior roles.

Meetings are another problem area. Research shows that men are more likely than women to dominate the conversation, and that whereas men with expertise tend to be *more* influential, women with expertise tend to be *less* so. Our study of lawyers found that half of women report being interrupted in meetings at a higher rate than their male peers are. Another study found that in meetings that included more men than women (a common scenario), women typically participated about 25% less often than their male coworkers did. Double standards and stereotypes play out whenever diverse identities come together. Is a woman “emotional,” or a Black man “angry,” while a white male is “passionate”? We once heard from a woman scientist that she was sharply criticized as “aggressive” when she brought up a flaw in a male colleague’s analysis; after that she felt she needed to

just “bring in baked goods and be agreeable.” A Black tech company executive we know told us about a meeting during which she said little while the only other woman, an Asian American, said a lot. But she later heard that people thought she had “dominated” the conversation while her Asian American peer had been “very quiet.”

Unsure whether this sort of thing is happening on your team? Start tracking assignments and airtime in meetings. Use our free online tools (at <http://biasinterrupters.org/toolkits/orgtools/>) to find out which work done by your group is higher- or lower-profile and who’s doing what. For meetings, pay attention: Who’s at the table? Who’s doing the talking? Is someone taking notes when he or she could be leading the conversation? If you find a problematic dynamic, here are some ways to change it:

1. Set up a rotation for office housework, and don’t ask for volunteers. “I always give these tasks to women because they do them well/volunteer” is a common refrain. This dynamic reflects an environment in which men suffer few consequences for bypassing or doing a poor job on low-value work, while women who do the same are seen as “prima donnas” or incompetent. Particularly when administrative staff is limited, a rotation helps level the playing field and makes it clear that everyone is expected to contribute to office housework. If you ask for volunteers, women and people of color will feel powerful pressure to prove they are “team players” by raising their hands.

2. Mindfully design and assign people to high-value projects. Sometimes we hear “It’s true, I keep giving the plum assignments to a small group—but they’re the only ones with the skills to do them!” According to Joyce Norcini, formerly general counsel for Nokia Siemens Networks, if you have



Idea in Brief

THE PROBLEM

Bias is difficult to eliminate. Many companies spend millions each year on antibias training that rarely delivers. The challenge, then, falls on individual leaders to ensure and develop team diversity—to accomplish what their organization couldn’t.

RECOGNIZING BIAS

Bias appears in everyday work interactions. Managers can counter bias by being aware of it in those interactions—where and when it surfaces—and interrupting it. Areas of focus are: fairness in hiring (is your candidate pool diverse?), day-to-day team management (are women assigned more “office housework” than men?), meeting management (do some employees have more access to your time because you share interests?), and team development (do you separate performance from potential, and personality from skill sets?).

INTERRUPTING BIAS

Interrupting bias includes eliminating artificial advantages in hiring, responding to double standards and stereotypes, scheduling meetings that everyone can attend, and setting clear evaluation and promotion criteria.

■ Whenever possible, schedule meetings during working hours, or you risk putting caregivers and others with a demanding personal life at a disadvantage.

only a tight circle of people you trust to handle meaningful work, you're in trouble. Her advice: Reconsider who is capable of doing what these important jobs require; chances are someone not on your usual list is. You may need to move outside your comfort zone and be more involved in the beginning, but having a broader range of trained people will serve you well in the end.

3. Acknowledge the importance of lower-profile contributions.

"Diversity" hires may lag behind their majority-member peers because they're doing extra stuff that doesn't get them extra credit. If your organization truly prioritizes inclusion, then walk your talk. Many bosses who say they value diversity programming and mentorship don't actually take it into account when promotion or comp time becomes available. Integrating these contributions into individual goal setting and evaluating them during performance reviews is a simple start. And don't be afraid to think big: A law partner we know did such a great job running the woman's initiative that the firm begged her to stay on for another year. She said she would if the firm's bosses made her an equity partner. They did.

4. Respond to double standards, stereotyping, "manterruption," "bropropriating," and "whipeating." Pay close attention to the way people on your team talk about their peers and how they behave in group settings. For example, men tend to interrupt women far more often than the other way around; displays of confidence and directness decrease women's influence but increase

men's. If a few people are dominating the conversation in a meeting, address it directly. Create and enforce a policy for interruptions. Keep track of those who drown others out and talk with them privately about it, explaining that you think it's important to hear everyone's contributions. Similarly, when you see instances of "bropropriating" or "whipeating"—that is, majority-group members taking or being given credit for ideas that women and people of color originally offered—call it out. We know two women on the board of directors of a public company who made a pact: When a man tried to claim one of their ideas, the other would say something like "Yes, I liked Sandra's point, and I'm glad you did too." Once they did this consistently, bropropriating stopped.

5. Ask people to weigh in. Women, people of Asian descent, and first-generation professionals report being brought up with a "modesty mandate" that can lead them to hold back their thoughts or speak in a tentative, deferential way. Counter this by extending an invitation: "Camilla, you have experience with this—what are we missing? Is this the best course of action?"

6. Schedule meetings inclusively. Business meetings should take place in the office, not at a golf course, a university club, or your favorite concert venue. Otherwise you're giving an artificial advantage to people who feel more comfortable in those settings or whose personal interests overlap with yours. Whenever possible, stick to working hours, or you risk putting caregivers and others with a demanding

personal life at a disadvantage. Joan once noticed that no mothers were participating in a faculty appointment process because all the meetings were held at 5:30 PM. When she pointed this out to the person leading them, the problem was fixed immediately. This colleague had a stay-at-home wife and simply hadn't thought about the issue before.

7. Equalize access proactively. Bosses may meet with some employees more regularly than others, but it's important to make sure this is driven by business demands and team needs rather than by what individuals want or expect. White men may feel more comfortable walking into your office or asking for time. The same may be true of people whose interests you share. When Emily Gould Sullivan, who has led the employment law functions for two *Fortune* 500 retail companies, realized that she was routinely accepting "walking meeting" invitations from a team member who was, like her, interested in fitness, she made a point of reaching out to others to equalize access.

Developing Your Team

Your job as a manager is not only to get the best performance out of your team but also to encourage the development of each member. That means giving fair performance reviews, equal access to high-potential assignments, and promotions and pay increases to those who have earned them. Unfortunately, as we've noted, some groups need to prove themselves more than others, and a broader range of behaviors is often accepted from white men. For example,



our research shows that assertiveness and anger are less likely to be accepted from people of color, and expectations that women will be modest, self-effacing, and nice often affect performance assessments. One study found that 66% of women's reviews contained comments about their personalities, but only 1% of men's reviews did. These double standards can have a real impact on equity outcomes. PayScale found that men of color were 25% less likely than their white peers to get a raise when they asked for one. And gender norms stunt careers for women. PayScale found that when women and men start their careers on the same rung of the professional ladder, by the time they are halfway (aged 30–44), 47% of men are managers or higher, but only 40% of women are. These numbers just worsen over time: Only 3% of the women make it to the C-suite, compared with 8% of the men.

Take these steps to avoid common pitfalls in evaluations and promotions:

1. Clarify evaluation criteria and focus on performance, not potential.

Don't arrive at a rating without thinking about what predetermined benchmarks you've used to get there. Any evaluation should include enough data for a third party to understand the justification for the rating. Be specific. Instead of "She writes well," say "She can write an effective summary judgment motion under a tight deadline."

2. Separate performance from potential and personality from skill sets. In-groups tend to be judged on their potential and given the benefit of the doubt, whereas out-groups have to show

they've nailed it. If your company values potential, it should be assessed separately, with factors clearly outlined for evaluators and employees. Then track whether there's a pattern as to who has "potential." If so, try relying on performance alone for everyone or get even more concrete with what you're measuring. Personality comments are no different; be wary of double standards that affect women and people of color when it comes to showing emotion or being congenial. Policing women into femininity doesn't help anyone, and—as courts have pointed out—it's direct evidence of sex discrimination. If that's not motivation enough, evaluators can miss critical skills by focusing on personality. It's more valuable, and accurate, to say someone is a strong collaborator who can manage projects across multiple departments than to say "She's friendly and gets along with everyone."

3. Level the playing field with respect to self-promotion.

The modesty mandate mentioned above prevents many people in out-groups from writing effective self-evaluations or defending themselves at review time. Counter that by giving everyone you manage the tools to evaluate their own performance. Be clear that it's acceptable, and even expected, to advocate for oneself. A simple two-pager can help overcome the modesty mandate and cue majority men (who tend toward overconfidence) to provide concrete evidence for their claims.

4. Explain how training, promotion, and pay decisions will be made, and follow those rules. As the chair of her firm's women's initiative, one lawyer

we know developed a strategy to ensure that all candidates for promotion were considered fairly. She started with a clear outline of what was needed to advance and then assigned every eligible employee (already anonymized) to one of three groups: green (meets the objective metrics), yellow (is close), and red (doesn't). Then she presented the color-coded list to the rest of the evaluation team. By anonymizing the data and pregrouping the candidates by competencies, she ensured that no one was forgotten or recommended owing to in-group favoritism.

All the evaluators were forced to stick to the predetermined benchmarks, and as a result, they tapped the best candidates. (Those in the yellow category were given advice about how to move up to green.) When it comes to promotions, there may be limits to what you can do as an individual manager, but you should push for transparency on the criteria used. When they are explicit, it's harder to bend the rules for in-group members.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE is crucial, but it doesn't happen overnight. Fortunately, you can begin with all these recommendations *today*. ☺

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HOW YOU CAN BE ANTI-RACIST

Quick Takes



1. Getting Over Your Fear of Talking About Diversity

→ by DAISY AUGER-DOMINGUEZ

WHILE 27% OF chief diversity officers find themselves still having to make the case for diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the workplace, the good news is that the majority of top leaders already understand how critical these efforts are. Indeed, in my work in talent and diversity at Google, Disney, and other large firms, I've found many leaders eager for actionable frameworks and advice to create more-inclusive cultures. But again and again I

find one thing plaguing their attempts: fear.

These leaders are so terrified about messing up and saying the wrong thing to all their stakeholders—employees, board members, funders, clients, customers, or the wider world via social media—that they're paralyzed into inaction. Take my experience at Google in the summer of 2015, at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement. Black employees led walkouts to shine a light on

the marginalization and structural inequities they faced in the workplace. Several of my white manager-level colleagues approached me to express their anxiety about how to effectively engage with their employees of color about the protests. Should they say something? Do something? How could they, as white leaders, speak about anything related to the Black experience without offending anyone? Would I look over messages they were drafting for their teams before they sent them? They needed encouragement, permission, and advice before they could do the work of inclusive leadership.

But it is critical that leaders not put this work on employees of color but rather be visible doing this work themselves. When they don't, they lose their teams' trust and belief in their willingness to lead fairly—and they also set a poor example. I've led inclusion strategy and learning discussions at start-ups after which founders express dismay that their leadership teams did not participate more actively. If you want your team to stand up for inclusion, *you* need to stand up.

Don't let fear hold you back from this full engagement. Here's what I tell leaders who are afraid of taking a misstep

when trying to solve for diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workplaces.

Ask Better Questions

Genuine inquiry can promote trusting relationships and a safe, respectful, and supportive work environment even in times of complex change. And because you don't have to pretend you're more knowledgeable about these topics than you already are, asking questions can also help you overcome uncomfortable silences and awkward exchanges regarding power and privilege.

This doesn't mean tasking others with achieving your own goals: "How do we move the needle on our diversity and inclusion gaps?" Instead, seek to understand what challenges your employees face every day, especially any practices and behaviors that are causing them pain. Ask questions like:

- What are the biggest barriers to your success, and what role can I play in helping to remove them?
- Do you feel safe enough to take risks at work? To contribute? To belong to the community?
- What percentage of your time is spent on addressing exclusion or microaggressions against you or others?

HBR STAFF/INFLUX PRODUCTIONS/GETTY IMAGES

■ If you want your team to stand up for inclusion, you need to stand up.

- Whose voice or what perspective is missing from this conversation?

- How can I help amplify your voice and that of other underrepresented voices?

If you're afraid of making a vocabulary blunder—using the wrong terminology for someone's race, for example, or misgendering people—just ask about the role race plays in how they experience the workplace or about their pronouns. Most employees will welcome feeling seen and valued. For those who have been unduly bearing the burden of marginalization and exclusion, though, some questions may trigger deeply held emotions. In those cases, honor whether or not they want to engage in your questions. You can also offer another opportunity to speak if they don't want to do so in the moment.

Show courage not just in what you ask but in how you listen. Suspend your judgment, reduce your instinct to respond reactively, and take time to deeply reflect on what your people are telling you. Demonstrate your interest in their answers, and check to make sure you're understanding them.

As a leader you need to be careful in the words you use, but don't let your fear replace your curiosity.

Read Up

There is no playbook for standing face-to-face with inequity, injustice, and oppression while running a business or organization. But many resources can help you better understand the dynamics and the voices at play. Educate yourself on the issues women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, religious minorities, and other marginalized groups face, and the compounding effects of intersectional identities.

There are many books on these topics, and the best entry point depends in part on your own experiences. But a few go a long way. To improve your knowledge and ability to engage in racial dialogue, I suggest Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk About Race* (Seal Press, 2018). (I focus on race in these recommendations because I find it to be the most challenging topic for leaders to address, and it's often the root cause of other abuses of power in the workplace.) To better understand the experience of women of color in the workplace in particular, see Minda Harts's *The Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table* (Seal Press, 2019). For an exploration of identity, gender, and race, read Jodie Patterson's *The Bold World:*

A Memoir of Family and Transformation (Ballantine Books, 2019). And for a more general look at how to lead in an inclusive way, take up Dolly Chugh's *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias* (Harper Business, 2018).

Lean In to the Uncomfortable

As a leader in today's world, you are grappling with complex change on many levels while trying to understand human dynamics that can feel untranslatable, conflicting, and painful. But that's OK.

The only way to address the challenges associated with racism, sexism, and other forms of injustice in the workplace is to be open to experiencing this discomfort in an honest and forthright way. Push yourself to communicate candidly about difficult topics. Accept that you are never going to be perfect. Apologize and admit your mistakes and blind spots, express gratitude when someone corrects you, listen to those who have been injured or silenced, and commit to doing better. Then pick yourself up, go out there again, and do better.

Your actions as a leader are doubly powerful. In addition to standing up for others yourself, you signal to your

colleagues that it is also safe for them to do so.

Just Get Started

There are no shortcuts or silver bullets for enabling inclusive workplaces. But you need to start somewhere. Whether it's launching team conversations about white fragility, holding all-hands meetings calling out racially charged incidents when they happen, or introducing yourself with your pronouns, you can send a powerful message as an ally in a position of power and influence when you're the one who takes up the work.

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2. Success Comes from Affirming Your Potential

How African Americans can silence the naysayers and maximize opportunities at every career stage

→ by LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS and ANTHONY J. MAYO

WHEN YOU SEE how under-represented African Americans are in current leadership roles, it can be easy to get discouraged about their prospects for leadership advancement. Despite a rise in the number of Black college and university graduates, just 8% of managers and less than 4% of CEOs are Black. In the *Fortune* 500 companies there are currently only three Black chief

executives, down from a high of 12 in 2002.

We, however, are not discouraged. In the course of our research, we have met myriad African American leaders who, despite being underestimated, underappreciated, and underresourced, have prospered and achieved incredible success. How do they do it?

Our research suggests that success in the face of systemic

discrimination often begins with affirming one's own potential. When people believe in their ability to grow, they make decisions that reflect this conviction, such as investing in their potential, focusing on their unique strengths, and discovering new paths to success and fulfillment that align with their core values and leadership goals.

Here, we offer a set of self-affirmations developed

from interviews and surveys we have conducted with African American professionals, as well as from our analysis of research on Black leadership and career paths. The practice of self-affirmation has broad benefits, not just in helping people develop a healthy self-identity but also in limiting the detrimental effects of identity threats like negative stereotyping and overt discrimination. For the Big idea series Advancing Black Leaders (HBR.org), we created self-affirmations to use as an antidote to the unique struggles too many African Americans face in a number of situations: when they have their leadership authority or expertise questioned; when they struggle to represent their most authentic self; or when they want to clear pathways for others to make racial progress. We tested these affirmations for validity among a group of approximately 150 African American professionals across all career stages and found that they indeed reflected people's experiences, fears, and successes. We also asked HBR readers to share which affirmations most resonate with their work experiences (see a selection of their responses in a video at <https://hbr.org/video/embed/6106652914001>).

ARTWORK FROM LEFT: MAX SANSING, A CONSTANT REMINDER, 2018; RIGHT, 2016

■ When people believe in their ability to grow, they make decisions that reflect this conviction.

We hope you'll draw on these affirmations as a reminder of your extraordinary potential, particularly in those moments in which you find your leadership authority challenged by others, when you've begun to doubt your ability to advance, or when you wonder whether the trade-offs have been worth it. We hope they will propel you to lead and contribute in uniquely valuable ways to your workplace, industry, and community.

Black Leadership Self-Affirmations

Ideally, you will begin to develop your leadership vision early in your career, sometimes even before your first job. At this stage, you are responsible for building the core capabilities that will help you grow in the future. Here are some affirmations that can help.

In the early stage of my career, I envision myself becoming a leader.

- I build a robust sense of self that strengthens me.
- I critically question and reject negative stereotypes and society's lowered expectations of Black leaders.
- I embrace my unique strengths and cultural resources. I bring new perspectives and ideas that have

value and are specific to my experience.

- Like everyone else, I will fail sometimes. This is not because of my race, and my failures do not reflect on my race as a whole. Because I understand this, I use every failure as an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop my resiliency.

- The workplace is not perfect, and neither are my colleagues. At times, I experience painful bias, but I do not let these microaggressions limit my career. Instead of shutting down or quitting, I choose to seek the support of my colleagues in making my workplace more inclusive.

- I develop the credibility, networks, and capabilities to thrive by aligning my skills and my cultural resources—my connections and my background—with strategic opportunities for my company and career.

THE MIDDLE PART of your career is important for expanding your expertise beyond your areas of specialization and gaining visibility to assume leadership roles. We hope that you have already experienced some success as an individual contributor and can shift your attention from yourself to your expanding leadership capabilities. During this stage, you

may question the “why” (your purpose and desired impact), the “what” (your cultural, value, and skill-based fit), and the “how” (your tactics) for leadership development and advancement. Here are some affirmations that can help.

In the middle stage of my career, I am positioned to grow into greater leadership roles.

- I recognize that as my core strengths and talents increase, I can be a stronger contributor in my organization. I draw on these attributes to position myself for increased responsibility and greater visibility and impact.

- I proactively cultivate vibrant networks—both existing and new—in which my peers and mentors support my growth. I know I can't necessarily rely on existing networks to provide me with everything I need to grow and develop; too often, marginalized people are excluded from these places. While I do participate in existing networks if possible, I also construct my own spaces where I can draw support while I learn and grow.

- Sometimes, even when I am in a position of authority, my authority is challenged or contested. I choose to not let this make me feel less secure in my leadership. I learn

from feedback and others' perceptions, but I do not let them limit my leadership potential.

- When the path forward isn't obvious, I carve my own path. I have deep ingenuity and know I am capable of building inclusive and high-performing organizations in which I can flourish.

- At times I question whether I have to choose between my career success and my authentic self. I want to be able to wear my hair and clothes in a manner that I feel is professionally authentic, discuss my personal interests and commitments with my colleagues and supervisors, and honor my unique background and experiences. For the sake of my health, I make choices that promote my ability to be authentic at work—whether that is expressing myself through my appearance or my language—and I am accountable for those decisions. This is the paradox of authenticity. I embrace this with courage.

IN THE LATE stage of your career, you may shift your focus from personal development to developing others. You have achieved a considerable measure of success in certain areas, and these affirmations can help you consider how to maximize your impact.



In the late stage of my career, I use my leadership, power, and influence for good.

- I face the same challenges as other leaders when it comes to fighting biases, ethical breaches, and abuses of power. At the same time, because of my race, I am held to higher standards and face greater scrutiny. I continue to uphold my integrity by being mindful of my decisions about how I lead, and I use my powers to uplift others.
- My power and influence give me the opportunity to design and implement more inclusive leadership practices, regardless of my job title or formal responsibilities. I use this opportunity to clear the pathway to leadership for others.
- I willingly pass on experience, knowledge, and credibility to expand opportunities for the rising generation. In so doing, my legacy is strengthened.
- I seek out people on the margins of the organization and find more ways to both include them in conversations and bring their names to meetings in which they might not otherwise have been mentioned. It is my personal responsibility to make open, public commitments to developing these future leaders.

Finding the Space to Support Your Growth

The work outlined above is designed to help aspiring and accomplished Black leaders navigate their experiences in the workplace. Many of the affirmations are about shaping the context of your career and responding strategically to bias, microaggressions, and authenticity struggles. This is hard work.

Here is our final affirmation for Black leaders across all career stages.

I find space—space to be nourished, space to explore, and space to flourish.

Even if you have access and opportunity, you are still facing systemic challenges in the workforce. The advancement of Black men and women in senior leadership positions is stagnating. Today there are only three Black CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies, compared with the peak of 12 in 2002. And not one is a woman. It's easy to understand, then, why Black MBAs are generally less satisfied in their careers than their non-Black counterparts. We say this starkly because it underlines why space is so important: There are many places where the soil for professional growth is rocky rather than fertile.

When this happens, it is important to seek physical spaces that are conducive to your growth, including at historically Black colleges and universities, race-inclusive leadership development programs, Black churches and civic engagement organizations, and same-race peer-mentoring programs.

These spaces may be difficult to find. But your commitment to invest in your own growth and development can help guide you to supportive opportunities to learn, fail, try again, and grow stronger.

Even in places where the soil is rocky, remember that it is not your responsibility to grow there. People of all races across your organization are responsible for improving the environment. Look for people who are forging cross-race alliances, providing significant line or general management experiences, creating opportunities for global assignments, or enabling mentorship and sponsorship that provide candid feedback and positioning.

This last affirmation is extremely important: While our model puts you—the leader—at the center, we don't want you to feel alone in the weight of what you want to accomplish. Across the country, there are millions of us working alongside

you, because we, too, believe in our collective potential.

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3. People Suffer at Work When They Can't Discuss the Racial Bias They Face Outside of It

→ by SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT, MELINDA MARSHALL, and TRUDY BOURGEOIS

IN 2017, in an unprecedented show of solidarity, 150 CEOs from the world's leading companies banded together to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace and, through an online platform, shared best practices for doing so. To drive home the urgency, the coalition's website, CEOAction.com, directs visitors to research showing that diverse teams and inclusive leaders unleash innovation, eradicate groupthink, and spur market growth. But as Tim Ryan, U.S. chair and senior partner at

PwC and one of the organizers of the coalition, explains, what galvanized the group was widespread recognition that "we are living in a world of complex divisions and tensions that can have a significant impact on our work environment"—and they need to be openly addressed.

At the Center for Talent Innovation, we wanted to look into these suspicions. Do the political, racial, and social experiences that divide us outside of work undermine our contributions on the job? Our nationwide survey

of 3,570 white-collar professionals (374 Black, 2,258 white, 393 Asian, and 395 Hispanic) paints an unsettling landscape: For Black, Asian, and Hispanic professionals, race-based discrimination is rampant outside the workplace. Black individuals are especially struggling, as 78% of Black professionals say they've experienced discrimination or fear that they or their loved ones will—nearly three times as many as white professionals.

But 38% of Black professionals also feel that it

is never acceptable at their companies to speak out about their experiences of bias—a silence that makes them more than twice as vulnerable to feelings of isolation and alienation in the workplace. Black employees who feel muzzled are nearly three times as likely as those who don't to have one foot out the door, and they're 13 times as likely to be disengaged.

The response at most organizations is no response. Leaders don't inquire about coworkers' life experiences. They stay quiet when headlines blare reports of racial violence or videos capture acts of blatant discrimination. Their silence is often born of a conviction that race, like politics, is best discussed elsewhere.

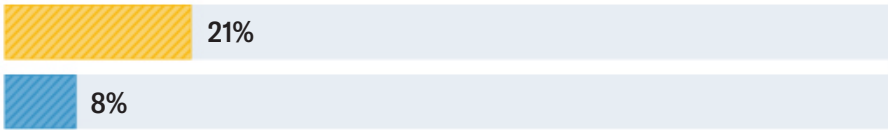
But as evidenced by the formation of the coalition and the initiatives we captured in our report, that attitude is shifting. Conscious that breaking the silence begins with their own example, captains of industry are talking about race, both internally with their employees and externally with the public. After a spate of shootings of unarmed Black men in the summer of 2016, Ryan initiated a series of discussion days to ensure that all employees at PwC better understood the experiences of their Black colleagues. Michael Roth, CEO of

What Happens When Racial Bias Isn't Discussed at Work

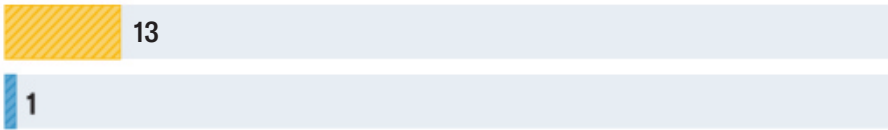
Black employees suffer when they can't speak out about their life experiences with discrimination.

Black employees who say it's **never acceptable** to speak out at work Black employees who say it's **acceptable** to speak out at work

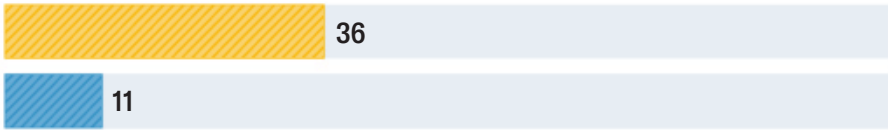
Percentage who say they: Intend to leave their companies within a year



Are disengaged



Can't bring their whole selves to work



The Power of Companies Taking a Stand Against Racism

When people are aware of a company responding to a societal incident of racial bias, a high percentage say it made them view the company in a more positive way. Percentage by race or ethnicity.



Source: Center for Talent Innovation

Interpublic Group, issued an enterprisewide e-mail imploring coworkers to “connect, affirm our commitment to one another, and acknowledge the pain being felt in so many of our communities.” Bernard Tyson, CEO of Kaiser Perma-

nente, published an essay in which, in a plea for empathy, he shared his own experiences of discrimination. And in an emotional recounting of his Black friend’s experience outside the office that went viral on YouTube, AT&T

chairman Randall Stephenson encouraged employees to get to know one another better.

Leaders who display this kind of courage don’t always see immediate rewards, but in the long term, our research suggests that the payoff could be extraordinary. Of those who are aware of companies responding to societal incidents of racial discrimination, robust majorities of Black (77%), white (65%), Hispanic (67%), and Asian (83%) professionals say they view those companies in a more positive way. Interviews with employees at firms like Ernst & Young point to stronger bonds forged between team leaders and members as a result of guidelines disseminated to managers on how to have a trust-building conversation. Town halls at New York Life with members of the C-suite and Black executives have likewise paved pathways for greater understanding across racial and political divides.

CEOs at the cutting edge, in short, are working to ease the racial tensions and heal the painful divides that undermine trust among coworkers and team members. That’s obviously good for business. But as the CEO Action coalition acknowledges, it’s also a powerful first step in mitigating the violence erupting

outside their company walls. In our current landscape of raging partisanship, this is one corporate agenda we must all embrace.

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4. Our Biases Undermine Our Colleagues' Attempts to Be Authentic

→ by TINA R. OPIE and R. EDWARD FREEMAN

THE TERM “AUTHENTICITY” has become a buzzword among organizational leaders, with employers encouraging job candidates and employees to bring their whole selves to interviews or the workplace. And while employee authenticity can be positive—after all, it is related to a bevy of positive employee outcomes such as engagement, voice, work-life satisfaction, performance, and well-being—many organizations may be unwittingly setting themselves up for failure when they jump on the authenticity bandwagon. In fact, by en-

couraging employee authenticity, these organizations may be creating an untenable and unethical tension between employee authenticity and employee fit.

While “authenticity” can mean different things to different people, organizations usually talk about it in terms of people being able to be uniquely themselves at work. This can manifest itself in many ways, from how we talk to the way we set up our desks. In this article, we’ll be focusing on one other common way people express their authentic selves—their

outward appearance—from two perspectives to see how this plays out.

First, consider the case of Chastity Jones, who received a formal job offer from an insurance claims processing center in 2010. Jones’s offer was rescinded when she refused to get rid of her dreadlocks, a hairstyle that the firm deemed a poor fit for its culture. Specifically, according to a human resources manager, dreadlocks “tend to get messy”; therefore, the hairstyle violated the company’s requirement that all employees project “a professional and businesslike image.” Jones refused to cut off her dreadlocks; to her, they reflected her identity as a Black woman and were an element of her authentic self-expression. She filed suit against the insurance company, which she eventually lost because the court ruled that while the law protects discrimination based on her hair texture (an immutable trait; hence, employees do not have a choice in the matter), companies can legally discriminate on the basis of hairstyle (a mutable trait; employees have a choice). In this example, organizational culture and the legal system mutually reinforce the idea that non-Eurocentric hair is unprofessional.

So while organizations may blithely encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work, such authenticity may be impossible for employees who do not conform to organizational notions of professionalism. And while this particular case led to litigation, you could see how subtler versions of it might play out on a daily basis.

Now, let’s look at a different visual cue. One of us (Tina) recently asked an audience of 100-plus diversity and inclusion scholars and practitioners to identify the most common symbol of organizational culture and professionalism. Attendees shouted out, “The business suit!” and they were right. Yet the audience fell silent when asked to identify where the business suit originated: the European royal court. In 1666 Charles II introduced lavishly colored royal attire that helped distinguish members of royalty from lower-class individuals. This style was popular until the French Revolution, when class tensions over economic inequalities made it unwise to wear attire that heralded elite social class. By 1799, the fashion landscape was primed for redefinition and adjustments to previous styles. Enter Beau Brummell, a British “dandy” from the lower class who climbed the social ladder by



providing fashion advice to wealthy elites. Brummell is credited with introducing European men to well-tailored, darker-colored suits that were complemented with intricately knotted neckties. Initially, elite men wore these suits as dressy lounging attire.

Over time, the suit's usage became widespread and evolved into the expected form of workplace attire. And yet, much like the scholars and practitioners, most managers are likely unaware of its Eurocentric history. It's just one, albeit ubiquitous, illustration of how country- or region-centric cultural norms—in this case, derived from class-based signifiers—have become assumed signals of professionalism.

This all leads back to the issue of authenticity, and an important question: When leaders are assessing employee fit, are they inadvertently judging how well employees conform to the majority culture rather than how well suited they are to perform their jobs? For organizations to even begin encouraging employees to be authentic, leaders must acknowledge that organizational culture (and hence, organizational notions of professionalism) is inevitably influenced by a location's his-

tory and norms. Leaders must ask: "Is my organization encouraging authenticity only if it conforms to existing ideas about professionalism?" "Is it ethical to encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work while, wittingly or not, using culturally biased standards to determine fit?" And if the answer to one or both questions is yes, "Is my organization truly interested in authenticity or merely creative conformity?"

This may be a difficult idea to absorb, and there are bound to be strong responses. Some leaders may protest, "But employee authenticity is a good thing! Even small steps to address it are better than cultivating cookie-cutter employees." We agree that employee authenticity can be positive. Yet in our experience, positive outcomes like engagement and work-life satisfaction are most likely to occur when employees work in organizational cultures that actually value employee authenticity rather than paying it lip service.

Another critique might be that organizations need to have some standards and norms to effectively function. Of course, we are not suggesting that organizations eliminate all standards, but rather that they need to examine whether what they

say ("We value authenticity") matches what they do. If leaders notice that, despite organizational statements of valuing employee authenticity, the ways employees present themselves are glaringly similar, employees may not be convinced that the organization truly values authenticity.

So what can managers and leaders do to actually create organizational cultures that do value authenticity?

Observe and document.

Standards of professionalism often go unnoticed or unchallenged because of their taken-for-granted status. To make these standards more salient, organizational leaders should actively question them. For example, do certain appearances strike you as professional whereas others strike you as unprofessional? Document the specific characteristics, and be sure to go beyond a mere description ("This person's hair looks neat and this person's hair looks messy"). Perhaps you think that one hairstyle is stylish and the other is not. Then dig deeper and ask yourself whether what you consider stylish may be influenced by hair texture. It may be easier to obtain a "chic" hairstyle if you have straight hair versus curly or coiled hair.

Reflect. Are the assumptions you just surfaced culturally biased? Are some demographic groups affected more negatively than other groups? To answer this question, it might be helpful to ask your employees themselves.

What are their thoughts on the organization's stated and unstated standards of professionalism? In addition, it's wise to look at existing research and resources that offer insights about how historically underrepresented groups may be most negatively affected and provide steps to create more-inclusive workplaces.

Empathize. Take the perspective of employees who may have to exert greater effort to conform to organizational standards. Straightening one's hair, squeezing into uncomfortable business shoes, wearing suits, and dyeing gray hair are just a few examples of steps that employees may make to conform to standards of professionalism. But at what cost? When employees conform to standards they find inauthentic, they may experience decreased productivity, less commitment, and less satisfaction.

Be a role model. As an organizational leader, employees take notice of, and even mimic, your behavior. By modeling authentic behavior, you can positively influence employees. If you work in an environment where employees tend to wear somber colors, what would happen if you wore a brightly colored shirt, jacket, or suit and encouraged your employees to do the same?

If leaders are not willing to closely examine which cultures they unconsciously prioritize in the workplace and why, however, it might

be worth hitting the pause button on authenticity initiatives. While encouraging authenticity can be powerful for both employees and the companies they work for, this is only the case if leaders truly commit to ensuring that all authenticity is equally valued in today's workplace.

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JOHN SCOTT/GETTY IMAGES



5. How to Reduce Personal Bias When Hiring

→ by RUCHIKA TULSHYAN

WHEN IT COMES TO HIRING candidates from underestimated backgrounds, good intentions do not necessarily lead to good results. I once met a talent acquisition leader at a large global technology company who had changed the organization's hiring process in multiple ways to bring in more candidates of color but was frustrated by the lack of progress. Internal analyses showed that even though the company had interviewed a higher number of nonwhite candidates in preliminary rounds, their final hires were still overwhelmingly white.

I've seen this same situation play out in multiple organizations and industries, and it's often because well-intentioned hiring managers end up inadvertently weeding out qualified candidates from underestimated backgrounds because of bias.

Changes in process and diversity initiatives alone are not going to remedy the lack of equal representation in companies. Individual managers who are often making the final hiring decisions need to address their own bias.

But how? In my experience, managers can do several things. Before taking any

steps, however, it's important to accept that no one is pre-loaded with inclusive behavior. We are, in fact, biologically hardwired to align with people like us and reject those whom we consider different. Undoing these behaviors requires moving from a fixed mindset—the belief that we're already doing the best we possibly can to build diverse teams—to one of openness and growth, where we can deeply understand, challenge, and confront our personal biases.

Here are the specific strategies I recommend:

Accept that you have biases, especially affinity bias.

Even if you head up your organization's diversity committee and are from an underrepresented community, you have biases that impact your professional decisions, especially hiring. *Affinity bias*—having a more favorable opinion of someone like yourself—is one of the most common. In hiring, this often means referring or selecting a candidate who shares your same race or gender or who went to the same school, speaks the same language, or reminds you of your younger self.

Microsoft's head of global talent acquisition, Chuck Edward, told me that affinity bias is widespread in hiring



and often leads people to seek out, and hire, candidates who “look, act, and operate” like them. He admits falling into this trap himself. “I’ve had to be very careful to address it head-on,” he says.

Create a personal learning list. Spend time reading and learning about the experience of underrepresented communities at work. Among the books I recommend are *So You Want to Talk About Race* (Seal Press, 2018), by Ijeoma Oluo; *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Beacon Press, 2018), by Robin DiAngelo; and *What Works: Gender Equality by Design* (Belknap Press, 2016), by Iris Bohnet, which was recommended to me by Michelle Gadsen-Williams, a managing director and the North America lead for inclusion and diversity at Accenture. I’ve found HBR’s *Women at Work* podcast to be an excellent resource as well.

Seek out resources you wouldn’t normally come across, and look for books and articles from underrepresented communities. In the U.S., that might include books that offer the perspectives of immigrants, people with disabilities, and Native American and indigenous communities.

Not only will this help you uncover the biases you’re bringing to hiring decisions, it will also equip you with the framework and language to recognize, and possibly call out, bias in your company’s processes.

Ask yourself, “Where could bias show up in this decision?” One team I work with had hiring managers who would often flippantly say things like “We should hire *this* person. I could easily see myself having beers with them after work” or “This candidate is qualified but really isn’t a cultural fit.”

These comments, laden with bias, would go unchecked. When the leadership team, which was entirely male and white, asked for my help in creating guidelines to reduce bias in the hiring processes, I suggested they start candidate debrief meetings by asking, “Where could bias show up in our decisions today?” This intervention, along with other process changes, led the team to hire two women leaders.

Explicitly acknowledging that we all have biases, especially unconsciously, and creating a space to call them out creates an opportunity to hold ourselves and one another accountable.

Reduce the influence of your peers’ opinions on your hiring decisions. In the past, Microsoft would allow hiring managers to see one another’s feedback on a candidate before it was their turn to interview them. “Everybody on the interview loop could see what others were saying—the words that were used, what was said about a candidate—before interviewing them,” says Edward. “It’s real clear how that could lead to biases and being influenced by someone else’s views.”

Recently, Microsoft made the feedback loop private—hiring managers can’t log in to the tool and see their colleagues’ feedback until they’ve entered their own assessment of a candidate first. Edward says that the change has allowed people the freedom to form their own opinions, without being influenced by their peers—or their bosses.

Even if you don’t use a software tool for hiring loops, refrain from comparing notes verbally until you have formed your own point of view on a candidate. I recommend writing down your feedback on the candidate and whether you’re inclined to hire him or her before you debrief with your colleagues. Again, ask yourself as you’re

writing: “How could bias have impacted my assessment and recommendation?”

Use a “flip it to test it” approach. In 2017, *Fortune* 500 executive Kristen Pressner gave a brave TEDx talk, where she admitted to harboring gender bias against women leaders despite identifying as a woman herself. Pressner developed a technique to disrupt bias: Ask yourself, if you were to swap out the candidate from an underrepresented background with one of your more typical hires, would you have the same reaction? For example, if a woman-of-color candidate speaks passionately, and you’re less inclined to hire her because you think of her as “angry,” would you use the same word if a white man spoke the same way?

“Flip it to test it” is a relatively easy way to call out bias as it happens. In a recent hiring decision that I was part of, a highly qualified woman of color was approached to apply formally for a role she was already informally performing the duties for. Since the organization was familiar with her work and performance, the hiring manager saw no harm in having her skip the early parts of the hiring process. But some colleagues expressed concern about “bending the rules” for her. During the

discussion, I flipped the concern by asking two questions: Would we have the same reservations if we were circumventing the traditional hiring process for a white person? In the past, when all the candidates we were considering were white men, did we focus extensively on the fairness of the hiring process? In both cases, the hiring committee unanimously answered “no.” We were able to recognize our bias and eventually made an offer to the candidate.

Understand how reducing bias could personally benefit you. Diversity in our workplace makes us smarter and more innovative, and promotes better critical thinking. It’s not only the organization that benefits; we personally have a lot to gain by working with people from all different backgrounds. By recognizing how we benefit from reducing our own bias—rather than focusing on the company’s ROI—we’re more likely to be motivated to take action.

As Gadsen-Williams told me, “A culture of equality is a multiplier. We can’t achieve a culture of equality if personal unconscious bias is not addressed first and foremost.”

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6. Focus on Inclusion—Not Just Diversity—to Retain Employees

→ by KAREN BROWN

TO RETAIN TALENT, most organizations offer the typical things: free coffee and tea in the break room, competitive benefits, generous raises and bonuses, and employee recognition programs. But none of that works for an employee who doesn’t feel comfortable in his or her work environment. Picture, for example, a Muslim who prays in his car because he doesn’t want to advertise his religion, a mother who doesn’t put up photos of her children so that coworkers won’t question her commitment to the job, or a

gay executive who is unsure whether he can bring his partner to company functions.

Employees who differ from most of their colleagues in religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and generation often hide important parts of themselves at work for fear of negative consequences. We in the diversity and inclusion community call this “identity cover,” and it makes it difficult to know how they feel and what they want, which makes them vulnerable to leaving their organizations.

Most business leaders understand the diversity part of diversity and inclusion. They get that having a diverse workforce is important to customers and critical to succeeding in a global market. It’s the inclusion part that eludes them—creating an environment where people can be who they are, that values their unique talents and perspectives, and makes them want to stay.

The key to inclusion is understanding who your employees really are. Three of the most effective ways to find out are survey assessments, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations. To be effective, however, they must be approached in a way that accounts for the fact that people—particularly those in underrepresented groups—can be more difficult to get to know than we think. Here are some best practices for getting to the heart of who your employees really are:

Segment employee engagement survey results by minority groups. Many organizations conduct employee engagement surveys, but most neglect to segment the data they collect by criteria such as gender, ethnicity, generation, geography, tenure, and role in the organization. By only looking at the total numbers,

■ Employees who differ from most of their colleagues often hide important parts of themselves at work for fear of negative consequences.

employers miss out on opportunities to identify issues among smaller groups that could be leading to attrition, as the views of the majority overpower those of minorities.

In 2015, for example, women constituted 52% of the new associate class at global law firm Baker McKenzie, but only 23% of the firm's 1,510 partners. To find out what was keeping women from advancing to senior roles, I asked our researchers to segment the results of a firmwide engagement survey to examine responses from women lawyers. On the basis of that data, we learned that many of the firm's women associates didn't want to be partner nearly as much as their male counterparts.

That prompted us to launch a follow-up survey to find out why, which revealed four things that would make partnership more attractive to women: more flexibility about face time and working hours, better access to high-profile engagements, greater commitment to the firm's diversity targets, and more women role models. Those four things became the basis for an action plan that included, for example, a firmwide flexible work program that promoted remote working. By 2018, the per-

centage of women promoted to partner had risen to 40%, up from 26% in 2015.

Use independent facilitators to conduct focus groups. Focus groups are another way to gain deeper insight into what employees care about and the issues that may be causing frustration and burnout.

One companywide employee engagement survey conducted by a \$15 billion food company showed that the employees in the Canada office had much lower work-life integration satisfaction scores than those in other countries. After conducting a series of focus groups to find out why, we discovered that many employees were receiving e-mails from their managers on weekends and felt obligated to respond even when their managers told them not to until Monday.

We also learned that the leaders in that office were often tied up in meetings all week and used the weekends to catch up on e-mail. When we asked the employees for solutions, they suggested banning e-mails on weekends and not having any meetings on Fridays so that managers could use that time to catch up on correspondence. After the office implemented these new

policies, employees reported being happier and less stressed when the survey was conducted a year later.

These groups are best facilitated by an outside company or trusted diversity and inclusion professionals who don't have a vested interest in the outcome so that employees can speak freely.

Get personal in one-on-one discussions. A one-on-one discussion with a manager can be the most powerful tool for finding out what an employee cares about. But for these conversations to be effective, the manager needs to have an open-door policy and exude a "tell me anything" persona. One way for managers to prove they are trustworthy is by sharing their own thoughts and feelings when they are tired, sad, or struggling with an issue. It helps show they're human.

Michael Santa Maria, who chairs Baker McKenzie's North America International Commercial and Trade Practice, tells his employees repeatedly that he wants them to succeed both at home and at work, and he takes an active interest in their families. His philosophy is that it's hard to succeed at work when things at home are failing, and he openly talks about his family to his staff and even

clients. The fact that he is open about his personal life makes his staff more comfortable sharing their own personal details—even those that may differ from the majority of their colleagues.

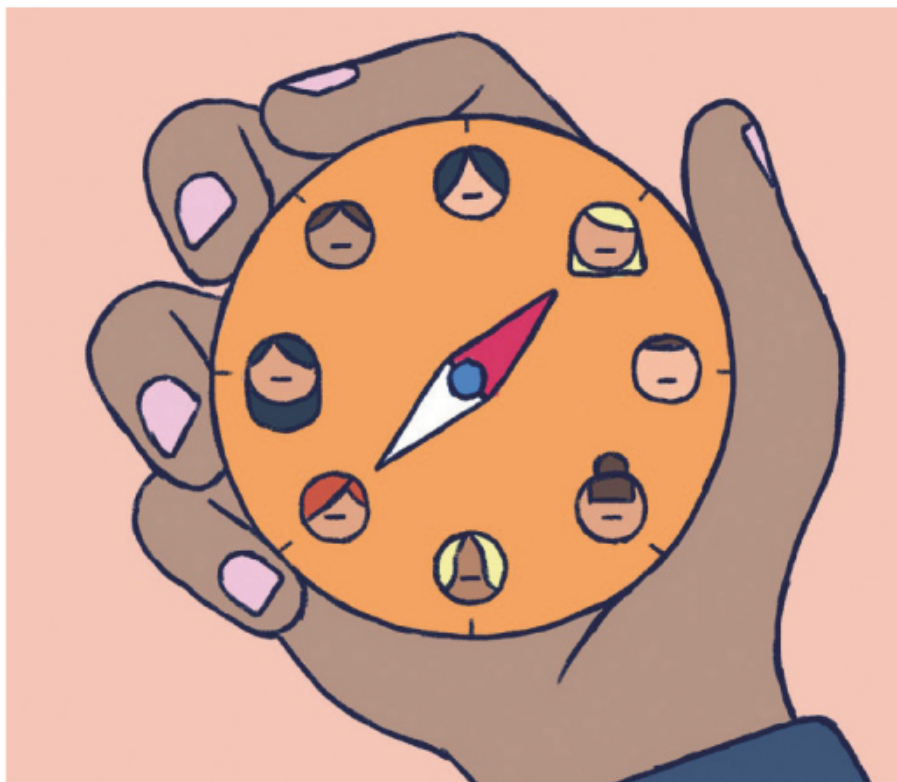
The Road to Retention

In an ideal world, all leaders would be adept at understanding their employees and making sure they didn't lose any through neglect or ignorance. In the real world, however, most aren't tuned in to the factors that can get in the way of knowing what's important to employees both individually and collectively. Tools such as segmented engagement surveys, focus groups, and personal conversations can guide management in taking the actions that will help keep their talent engaged and committed to the organization. The first step in retaining more employees is to use these tools.

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7. For Women and Minorities to Get Ahead, Managers Must Assign Work Fairly

→ by JOAN C. WILLIAMS and MARINA MULTHAUP

ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN trying to improve diversity in the workplace for decades—with little success. The most common techniques, such as onetime sensitivity trainings, haven't worked. The numbers of women and people of color in leadership roles are still staggeringly low across industries. Also well documented

are the high rates of turnover for women, especially women of color.

We need to try some new techniques, starting with making systemic changes to the ways businesses are run. These don't have to be big changes—in fact, even small tweaks to your basic systems (hiring, promotions,

compensation) can lead to big changes. For many companies, the focus so far has been on making small adjustments to how performance evaluations are done. This is important but insufficient, because evaluations are inherently backward-looking: They can measure only the assignments someone has already gotten.

And not all assignments are equal. In every organization, in every field, there are multiple types. Some assignments (*glamour work*) can set you up for promotion and skyrocket you to the top of your company. Others are necessary but unsung (*office housework*). Some are actual housework—getting the coffee for the morning stand-up or cleaning up after a lunch meeting—and some are the unsung operational or administrative work that keeps the company rolling along.

Studies, including our new research, show that women and people of color do more office housework and have less access to glamour work than white men do. If leaders are going to make a dent in their organizations' diversity problems, they have to address this disparity. In this article, we'll explain how the assignment gap arises, what managers can do about it, and how fixing the gap can

improve the engagement and retention of talented employees.

Office Housework Versus Glamour Work

Glamour work gets you noticed by higher-ups, gives you the opportunity to stretch your skills with a new challenge, and can lead to your next promotion. It's the project for a major client, the opportunity to build out a new team, or the chance to represent the company at an industry conference.

Office housework happens outside of the spotlight. Some is administrative work that keeps things moving forward, like taking notes or finding a time when everyone can meet. Some is emotional labor: "He's upset—fix it." Some is work that's important but undervalued, like initiating new processes or keeping track of contracts. This kind of assignment has to get done by *someone*, but it isn't going to make that person's career. It might also be a juicy-sounding assignment like chairing a diversity or company culture committee. While these initiatives sound impressive, they're usually not tied to revenue goals, so they are far less likely to result in a promotion than, say, chairing an innovation



or digital transformation committee.

The disparities in who does office housework and who does glamour work exist across industries. For example, a study of academia, by Cassandra Guarino of UC Riverside and Victor Borden of Indiana University, found that female professors do more committee service work and less research than male professors do. Committee work is important, but no one gets tenure for it.

15 Office Housework Tasks to Watch Out For

- Taking notes
- Procuring the conference room
- Getting everyone on the conference line
- Planning parties
- Buying the gifts for birthdays/retirements/baby showers
- Ordering lunch
- Organizing lower-level employees
- Mentoring activities
- Serving on committees that are not linked to revenue or core business goals
- Handling less-valued clients
- Handling HR tasks
- Handling routine work versus work that is central to business strategy
- Organizing off-site events

- Keeping the task list
- Keeping the trains running versus strategy and big-picture thinking

(The specifics vary by industry. For an industry-specific list, see the HBR article, “Hacking Tech’s Diversity Problem.”)

Our own research focused on engineering and law. We developed a tool, called the Workplace Experiences Survey, that tests for racial and gender bias in business systems, such as assignments. In a national study, our Center for WorkLife Law and the Society of Women Engineers gave an early version of the survey to more than 3,000 engineers. It found that women were 29% more likely than white men to report doing more office housework than their colleagues.

Our research shows there’s also a racial dynamic to disparities in assignments. When we surveyed a nationwide sample of lawyers, women of color were the most likely to report doing more administrative tasks than their colleagues—more than 20% more likely than white men. White women were 18% more likely to report doing more admin tasks than white men. When it comes to housework like cleaning up the coffee cups, women of color again were

the most likely group to say they do more than their colleagues—18% more likely than white men. (These findings will be published in a full report by the American Bar Association’s Commission on Women in the Profession, the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, and the Center for WorkLife Law.)

In our surveys, we heard things like this, from a female lawyer: “Despite superior educational credentials and being a lateral transfer from a far more prestigious firm, I was given an appropriate title but slotted into the subservient, support role (for example, expected to take notes, get coffee, hang men’s jackets, and so forth).”

And this, from an engineer: “Just last year they hired a new female, and one of the managers was telling me how happy they were about hiring her because she really clean[s] up after the guys and keeps the lab tidy.”

The gaps with glamour work, too, are large. Female engineers of color were 35% less likely than white men to report having equal access to desirable assignments; white women were 20% less likely. For lawyers, the findings were remarkably similar: Women of color were almost 30% less likely than white men to say they had equal opportunity

to high-quality assignments, and white women were 18% less likely.

Why Women and People of Color Get Worse Assignments

This assignments gap exists for a number of interconnected reasons. One is what researchers call *prescriptive stereotypes*, which dictate how Americans think a group of people should behave—for example, women should be modest, helpful, and “communal.” They are supposed to be self-effacing team players who put the company ahead of their individual ambitions. Prescriptive stereotypes also operate by race. Most obviously, Asian Americans are supposed to be deferential worker bees. But our research suggests that not just women but all people of color have been invited into professional workplaces but expected to play a very specific role there: Women of all races report higher levels of office housework, and both women and people of color (of both sexes) report less access to the glamour work.

Moreover, because of these stereotypes, women and people of color are under social pressures to volunteer for office housework activities. They also risk pushback

■ If managers and executives learn to better assign work, it could have a powerful impact on diversity.

if they don't take on these tasks ("She's just not a team player" or "She thinks highly of herself, doesn't she?"). And women are more likely to be *assigned* office housework because assigners tend to believe that women will accept the task.

White men are much less likely to be asked to do the office housework, and they experience less backlash if they decline to do it or simply do it poorly. Men can also get away with intentionally doing a bad job at a low-value task to avoid being asked to do it again. Because of prescriptive stereotypes, however, it's riskier for women to employ this tactic of strategic sloppiness.

One argument for why women do less high-profile work is that they don't *want* the high-risk, high-reward work. They're happy to be "team players" or "supporting players." But that's not what we found in our study. When we asked the lawyers in our sample if they were satisfied with their access to high-profile assignments, white men were the most likely to say yes. White women and women of color were 15% and 23% less likely to agree, respectively. Women want those assignments—they're just not getting them. Men of color also reported being less satisfied with their

access to high-profile assignments. One lawyer said: "I am a senior African American practitioner who has outstanding credentials but has routinely been overlooked for the 'plum' opportunities available to my peers."

For many women, the disparity in assignments comes back to what we've called *maternal wall bias*—a set of negative assumptions about mothers' competence and commitment. After having a child, mothers come back to work to find that their best projects and clients have been reassigned to colleagues. In some cases, women report that it takes years to get back to the type of work they were doing before taking maternity leave. As a white female lawyer reported, "I made partner in the shortest time of any female. Things were great. I had my son. I worked part-time during leave and came back in nine weeks. My work was gone. It has taken two years and a change in focus to get back to the level I was at."

How Team Managers Can Fix the Problem

To address these issues, managers first need to identify what the office housework is in their department and who is doing it. Make a list of regularly recurring housework tasks—setting up

conference call dial-in information, scheduling meetings, ordering food. Send your team members a short survey asking them how often they do each task and how much of their time it takes up.

Analyze the survey to determine (1) what the main office housework tasks are on your team and (2) whether anyone is doing more than their fair share. With this information, you can start ensuring a more equitable distribution of the office housework.

Don't ask for volunteers when assigning these tasks, whether they're housework (ordering food, setting up meetings) or mundane projects (leading the committee to decorate the office lobby). As discussed above, people can be under social pressure to volunteer. Instead, establish a system for making sure everyone takes a turn at these dull jobs. It doesn't really matter which system you choose—whether it's alphabetical by last name or chronological by birthday—as long as people take turns. Everyone on the team should do a task before someone does it twice.

Next, hold everyone accountable for the tasks they've been assigned—even small ones. If someone on your team never gets asked to do mundane tasks because

he's "just not a details guy," that's a performance problem. It should be addressed like any other performance issue.

Conversely, something we hear often is, "I ask women to plan the parties because they're better at it" or "I ask women to do those kinds of things because they're more organized." This kind of thinking can lead to a toxic environment where women are expected to take on and excel at unrewarding tasks, while men's time is protected for more-remunerative work.

Some managers may balk at our advice to give everyone, including their stars, the occasional dull assignment or rote task. Isn't their time too valuable for that? they may ask. We have two responses: First, if you have three top stars, and one of them is a woman, have you checked to make sure she's not the one who always gets coffee for the group? Make sure male and female stars are doing the same amount of office housework. Second, it's important training for your stars to know how to do the routine work. Stars will be even more effective if they know the full scope of work that goes into a project. If you "invisibilize" some parts of projects, stars won't be able to manage effectively when they get into leadership.



For new glamour work assignments, consider *all* eligible employees, not just the ones who come to mind first or who ask to do it. Formalize the pool of employees with the requisite skills by writing it down. Establish a rotation of plum assignments with the pool. While your rotation system for office housework can be somewhat arbitrary, your rotation for more-important assignments should be strategic; you'll want to match the job to the person much more carefully. But you should still be methodical about how you hand out these tasks. Some companies have instituted formal systems where an "assignments czar" is in charge of doling them out, monitoring people's workloads, and making sure employees are getting equal opportunities.

Sometimes the problem is that only a few employees have the requisite skills to tackle the plum assignments. To fix it, invest some time into helping other employees gain those needed skills. Junior employees can shadow senior workers, and if HR has any professional development funds, those can be used to help a broader range of people develop the skills. Another tactic is to reframe the assignment, breaking it

into smaller pieces that other people can work on.

What Senior Leaders Can Do

At the organizational level, senior leaders should encourage the managers they lead to work toward a more equitable distribution of assignments—not just for the business benefits of diversity but also for the company's overall health. If you have only two people in your organization who can deliver a deposition or negotiate a buy-out, your company is in a precarious situation. What if someone has a heart attack or gets a better offer? A more equitable division of assignments will spread those skills around.

Leaders should convene to identify the glamour work and the lower-profile work in their organization and who is being assigned to each.

A third party—HR, diversity and inclusion, or someone else—should analyze the data and look for patterns, both companywide and by individual supervisors. Are women doing less glamour work than men? Are some supervisors great at giving everyone career-enhancing work while others are struggling?

Provide feedback to supervisors whose glamour work allocation is lopsided.

Hold a meeting with that manager to bring the problem to his attention. Help him think through why he tends to assign glamour work to certain people or certain types of people. Often, simply pointing out this issue will help solve the problem. If a manager simply has only one or two people who can handle the glamour work, talk her through how to develop her team's skills. And if the manager pushes back, have some phrases handy, like "We need you to build those skills in more people" or "Upskilling more people will protect your department if someone leaves."

Organizations can also consider instituting a formal assignment system if these simpler methods aren't enough.

Communicate to everyone what your company values—and then make sure your systems bear it out. If your company encourages activities like mentoring and serving on the diversity committee, make sure those things count when the time comes for promotions and raises. Avoid mixed messages—often companies say they value office housework tasks but then fail to do so.

Lastly, but importantly, the goal of an equitable division of assignments needs to be

communicated clearly and consistently from the top down. Tell your managers that you expect them to allocate assignments fairly. Set goals and hold managers to them.

A System That Works Better—for Everybody

If managers and executives learn to better assign work, it could have a powerful impact on diversity—as well as retention and employee engagement. After all, if you're stuck taking the notes or making the slide deck for someone else's presentation, how can you show your stuff, get promoted, get that raise, rise to the top? And how will you find your job enjoyable and engaging if you never get a chance to do the exciting work?

And a fairer assignment system isn't good for only women and people of color. An introverted white man, who might not be the first one to raise his hand, will get a fairer shot at the best assignments. People raised with a no-bragging ethos, who wouldn't knock down their boss's door to pitch themselves, will also get a fairer shot. An equitable assignment system means that companies will be tapping into a broader talent pool—one that has been right under their nose

the whole time, stocked with overlooked expertise.

Lastly, a fairer assignment system may be one of the ways that companies give their overburdened, overworked, underrested stars a break. It's no fun feeling that you're the only person on your team who can take on the hardest projects or the most demanding clients. If companies keep giving the glory work to the same handful of people, the probability that those people will become burned-out and resentful will only increase.

If we want to see a change in the diversity of our companies, we have to start including assignments in our diversity initiatives. We have to start paying attention to who is always procuring the conference rooms and who is always pitching the clients.

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8. How Managers Can Promote Healthy Discussions About Race

→ by KIRA HUDSON BANKS

TIM WOLFE, FORMER president of the University of Missouri system, did not lose his job because of racist incidents on campus. He lost his job because he didn't talk about them.

Unwilling to acknowledge protesters during the homecoming parade and unable to effectively respond to questions about systematic oppression, Wolfe was seen by students as uninterested in addressing their concerns—concerns they had attempted to raise with him time and again.

Wolfe's ouster and similar stories underscore how the ability to discuss race and

racism is vital to being a leader today. While such dialogues can provoke anxiety or discomfort and be difficult to navigate, they are essential—and beneficial—even before an incident occurs.

Many white people may avoid conversations about race out of fear of "saying the wrong thing." And many people of color in predominantly white companies may avoid these conversations out of fear of being seen as a complainer—or worse. But pretending the elephant in the room isn't there won't make it go away.

Today, minorities make up 37% of the U.S. population

and will climb to 57% by 2060. The U.S. Department of Commerce projects nonwhite ethnic groups will represent 85% of U.S. population growth between 2011 and 2050. As these changes transform the workplace, being comfortable talking about race will become increasingly important.

Here are three steps—based on both my academic research and my consulting work—managers can take to increase discussion, decrease fear of saying the "wrong thing," and avoid sidestepping conflict:

Make inclusion a long-term investment. Stand-alone trainings and one-off dialogues—though currently considered best practice—are too quickly forgotten and too easily written off as "nice to do," limiting a company's ability to foster sustained workplace climate change. Positive change comes from customized trainings and regular discussions that are informed by and interwoven with business strategy (and presented consistently over time).

When conversations about race occur within a larger investment in inclusion, those discussions gain a context that helps employees understand why they're valuable



and where they fit into the overall business strategy. Cordoning off diversity and inclusion efforts in a single department signals those issues aren't priorities, making challenging conversations easier to avoid. Successful customized training sessions that are embedded and sustained over time involve cohort-based experiences, immersion opportunities, coaching, book clubs, and small study groups that convene for at least a quarter or, at best, a year or longer. And unconscious-bias training—which has gotten very popular recently—is important, but it's only one piece of the puzzle.

Just as becoming a skilled manager didn't happen in one workshop, becoming a competent participant in or a facilitator of racial dialogues also takes time and development. One company my firm worked with in the insurance sector engaged in customized diversity and inclusion training over the course of three years. Over time, this investment led to a significant overhaul of its evaluation metrics to ensure equity, as well as an increased capacity for difficult dialogues about race and other inclusion topics.

Embrace and reframe conflict. Companywide discussions about race can be tense,

and getting defensive is the quickest way to halt progress. Because fear of being seen as confrontational for either white or minority employees hinders open dialogue, conflict needs to be reframed as a solution-seeking act necessary to progress.

Instead of getting surprised by conflict, expect it, and lean on management and facilitation skills that include listening, being color-cognizant rather than color-blind, responding nondefensively, being open to learning, and self-reflecting about how personal and social identities can influence these interactions.

Research shows employees are more productive and exhibit stronger problem-solving capabilities when they work in diverse groups. Potential conflicts can become opportunities for growth and improved performance when management fosters an environment where discontent can be heard rather than treated as adversarial. Programs like Courageous Conversations, Third Sector New England, and the Diversity Awareness Partnership help company leaders navigate these difficult discussions.

Be proactive about inclusion efforts. Every manager should be willing to proactively ask employees to talk

about how they feel race has influenced their experience at the company, rather than wait for a crisis situation to emerge before tackling these issues. Preemptive discussions allow managers to direct the conversation in constructive ways and can help prevent future conflicts from spiraling out of control.

Some relevant questions to ask employees might include:

- Have you experienced any barriers to success at this company related to your race?
- Have you noticed any other obstacles in the way to your success?
- Can we do anything better to facilitate your success and sense of inclusion?
- In terms of mentorship and promotion, do you sense that those happen without bias?

While there is no one set of concrete steps for creating an inclusive environment in every company, you can take concrete steps in your company. If you don't know what they are, seek out ideas. Ask those you lead, of all races, whether they feel comfortable bringing their whole self to work, if they know about or experience unconscious bias, how they feel race has influenced their experiences at the company, and what changes might help make your workplace more inclusive. If employee resource groups

exist, ask for feedback about retention or mentoring.

And be prepared for some harsh truths. Racial discrimination, tokenism, and the sense of isolation are common concerns. But if you don't hear, acknowledge, and understand them, you can't do anything about them.

Retention and engagement of all employees, but in particular employees of color, can improve the bottom line. A study by McKinsey & Company found that organizations that ranked in the top quartile of racial diversity were 35% more likely to earn above-average financial returns.

Practice is key, and convening the conversation can go a long way toward improving climate. Yet, while it literally pays to be racially diverse, you can't leverage what you don't talk about. ☹

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“Color blindness is not an effective strategy for dealing with racial differences in the workplace. Rather, acknowledging and highlighting them, along with the related challenges, can go a long way toward kindling relationships.”

DIVERSITY AND AUTHENTICITY
PAGE 68



What Systemic Racism Looks Like

Toward a Racially Just Workplace

Laura Morgan Roberts and Anthony J. Mayo | page 10

At most large U.S. and multinational organizations, diversity and inclusion have become imperatives, but African Americans' progress remains slow. Even worse is the lived experience of Black employees, who often feel like outsiders—and are tempted to walk out the door.

Laura Morgan Roberts and Anthony Mayo have spent the past 20 years conducting and reviewing research on African Americans' advancement, particularly in the workplace. Despite some progress, working African Americans still face obstacles that other minorities and white women don't. If leaders want to walk their talk, they must advocate much more meaningful change.

Roberts and Mayo use their findings to lay out steps to help companies move toward better representation for Black leaders:

- *Shift away from the business case and toward a moral one.* Research has shown that diverse teams are good for the bottom line, but that thinking must be combined with the ethical implications of all decisions.
- *Encourage open conversations about race.* Senior leaders must set the tone, creating a culture of psychological safety. The goal is to shift the organization to a racial-learning orientation.
- *Revamp diversity and inclusion programs,* which require sustained C-suite support, to have clear goals and concrete, proactive measures.
- *Manage career development across all stages:* Increase investment in the recruitment, retention, and development of African American employees, from entry-level positions to C-suite succession planning.

First published in November 2019 as the lead article of HBR's The Big Idea package “Advancing Black Leaders,” the authors address the underrepresentation of African Americans in the workplace, offering a road map for change.

HBR Reprint BG1906

“Dear White Boss...”

Keith A. Caver and Ancella B. Livers
page 20

It's easy for white managers to assume that their colleagues of color face the same basic challenges they do. On one level that's true—the work itself is the same. But on another level, African American managers often contend with an atmosphere of tension, instability, and distrust that can be so frustrating they lose the desire to contribute fully. Their white bosses and coworkers are simply unaware of the “miasma” and are often puzzled when African Americans quit apparently for no reason or seemingly overreact to a minor incident.

This portrayal of what it's like to be different in the workplace takes the form of a fictional letter from a Black manager to a white boss. The letter, based on interviews and surveys the authors conducted with hundreds of mid- to senior-level African American managers, is not about the lack of role models or mentors of color or any of the other barriers that limit opportunities for Blacks in corporate America. Instead, the letter sheds light on the realities that lurk below the surface for Black managers—the feeling that they leave some part of their identities at home and the sometimes subtle and often systemic racial biases that inhibit and alienate African Americans.

“Differences really do matter, although they may matter in ways you probably didn't expect. One of the big ways they matter is that race is always with us,” the letter writer observes. “As a friend of mine said recently, ‘I don't think a day goes by that I'm not reminded that I'm Black.’”

The letter may not apply to every leader, Black or white, or to every organization, but the issues are more widespread than corporate America cares to acknowledge. It should be required reading for all white executives who don't want talent to slip through their fingers.

HBR Reprint R0211E



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Executive Summaries



What Systemic Racism Looks Like

The Costs of Code-Switching

Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee | page 26

“Code-switching,” a strategy long used by Black people to navigate interracial interactions, involves adjusting one’s speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in order to optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities.

First published in November 2019 as part of HBR’s The Big Idea package “Advancing Black Leaders,” this article explores how this common strategy affects Black workers’ chances for advancement—and their emotional well-being.

Code-switching has both positive and negative ramifications. For example, downplaying membership in a stigmatized racial group can increase perceptions of professionalism, boosting chances for hiring or promotion. However, it can also generate hostility from in-group members, bringing accusations of “acting white.”

The authors used a “code-switching at work” survey and an online experimental study to delve into the complexities of code-switching as experienced by Black workers. The research clearly showed that minorities who code-switch face a professional dilemma: Should they suppress their cultural identity for the sake of career success, or should they sacrifice potential career advancement in order to bring their whole selves to work?

This is not a dilemma that racial minorities should have to face alone. The authors offer suggestions to help companies, leaders and coworkers, and Black employees themselves explore the complexities of code-switching and tackle the behavior together.

HBR Reprint BG1906



Diversify Your Organization

Why Diversity Programs Fail

Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev
page 54

After Wall Street firms repeatedly had to shell out millions to settle discrimination lawsuits, businesses started to get serious about their efforts to increase diversity. But unfortunately, they don’t seem to be getting results: Women and minorities have not gained much ground in management over the past 20 years.

The problem is, organizations are trying to reduce bias with the same kinds of programs they’ve been using since the 1960s. And the usual tools—diversity training, hiring tests, performance ratings, grievance systems—tend to make things worse, not better. The authors’ analysis of data from 829 firms over three decades shows that these tools actually decrease the proportion of women and minorities in management. They’re designed to preempt lawsuits by policing managers’ decisions and actions. But as lab studies show, this kind of force-feeding can activate bias and encourage rebellion.

However, in their analysis the authors uncovered numerous diversity tactics that do move the needle, such as recruiting initiatives, mentoring programs, and diversity task forces. They engage managers in solving the problem, increase contact with women and minority workers, and promote social accountability. In this article, the authors dig into the data, executive interviews, and several examples to shed light on what doesn’t work and what does.

HBR Reprint R1607C

The Other Diversity Dividend

Paul Gompers and Silpa Kovvali
page 62

Researchers have struggled to establish a causal relationship between diversity and financial performance—especially at large companies, where decision rights and incentives can be murky, and the effects of any given choice can be tough to pin down. So the authors chose a “lab rat” with fewer barriers to understanding: the venture capital industry.

VC firms are fairly flat: Every investor is a decision maker, and choices have clear business consequences. Using publicly available information, researchers can see how similar or different decision makers are and compare decision quality on the basis of investments’ performance.

After examining tens of thousands of VC investments, Gompers has found that diversity significantly improves financial performance on measures such as profitable investments at the individual portfolio-company level and overall fund returns. And even though associating with similar people can have social benefits, it can lead investors and firms to leave a lot of money on the table.

In this article Gompers and Kovvali describe the research and provide recommendations for reaping the business benefits of diversity.

HBR Reprint R1804D

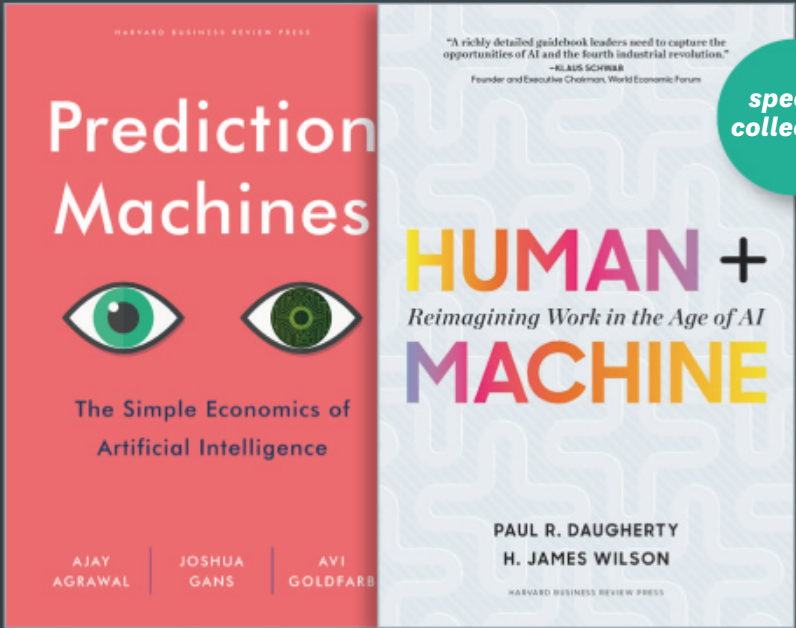
Diversity and Authenticity

Katherine W. Phillips, Tracy L. Dumas,
and Nancy P. Rothbard | page 68

Many minority members fail to understand that their career mobility can be affected by their colleagues' feelings of familiarity or closeness with them. Even those who do understand this can find building workplace relationships across racial boundaries difficult. Being one's true self, disclosing elements of one's personal life, and forming social connections are harder when attempted across a demographic boundary such as racial background. Helping workplace relationships flourish among people of differing races may require special effort.

The authors suggest several strategies that organizations can use to make employees from varied demographic groups feel comfortable engaging with one another: (1) Recognize the role that *structure*—such as formal icebreaker games or having a leader introduce everyone at a gathering—can play in easing the discomfort of free-form socializing. (2) Adopt a *learning* orientation by asking open and curious questions that demonstrate that being different makes someone more valuable. (3) Consider creating a buddy system of informal *mentorship*, in which more-experienced employees help facilitate social relationships for new hires.

HBR Reprint R1802L



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Executive Summaries



Diversify Your Organization

“Numbers Take Us Only So Far”

Maxine Williams | page 74

Though executives tend to think—and want to believe—they’re hiring and promoting fairly, bias still creeps into their decisions. They often use ambiguous criteria to filter out people who aren’t like them or deem people from minority groups to be “not the right cultural fit,” leaving those employees with the uneasy feeling that their identity might be the real issue.

Companies need to acknowledge that it’s fair for employees from underrepresented groups to be suspicious about bias, says Williams, Facebook’s global director of diversity. They also must find ways to give those workers more support. To that end, many organizations are turning to people analytics, which aspires to replace gut decisions with data-driven ones. Unfortunately, firms often say that they don’t have enough people from marginalized groups in their data sets to produce reliable insights.

But there are things employers can do to supplement small *n*’s: draw on industry or sector data; learn from what’s happening in other companies; and deeply examine the experiences of individuals who work for them, talking with them to gather critical qualitative information. If firms are systematic and comprehensive in these efforts, they’ll have a better chance of improving diversity and inclusion.

HBR Reprint R1706L



How You Can Be Anti-Racist

We Just Can’t Handle Diversity

Lisa Burrell | page 100

Decades’ worth of studies show that a diverse workforce measurably improves decision making, problem solving, creativity, innovation, and flexibility. But most of us also believe that hiring, development, and compensation decisions should come down to merit. Although the two ideas don’t seem contradictory, they’re tough to reconcile in practice. Cognitive roadblocks keep getting in the way.

The author looks at recent books and research studies on the subject, including *Success and Luck: Good Fortune and the Myth of Meritocracy*, by Robert H. Frank, and *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*, by Lauren A. Rivera. Frank points out, for example, that hindsight bias causes us to believe that random events are predictable and to manufacture explanations for the inevitability of our achievements. And winner-take-all markets intensify the consequences of our cognitive shortcuts. Rivera studied hiring committees at professional services firms that believed they were ensuring rigor and counteracting bias through group discussions of job candidates from the school-recruitment pipeline. But those conversations actually dampened diversity by giving negative racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes greater sway over decisions.

HBR Reprint R1607E

How the Best Bosses Interrupt Bias on Their Teams

Joan C. Williams and Sky Mihaylo
page 106

Companies spend millions on antibias training each year in hopes of creating more-inclusive—and thereby innovative and effective—workforces. Studies show that well-managed diverse groups perform better and are more committed, have higher collective intelligence, and excel at making decisions and solving problems. But research also shows that bias-prevention programs rarely deliver. So what can you, as an individual leader, do to ensure that your team is including and making the most of diverse voices? How can one person fix what an entire organization can’t?

Although bias itself is devilishly hard to change, it is not as difficult to interrupt. The authors have identified several practices that managers can use to counter bias (and avoid its negative effects) without spending a lot of time or political capital. In hiring, leaders should insist on a diverse pool, precommit to objective criteria, limit referral hiring, and structure interviews around skills-based questions. Day to day, they should ensure that high- and low-value work is assigned evenly and run meetings in a way that guarantees all voices are heard. In evaluating and developing people, they should clarify criteria for positive reviews and promotions, stick to those rules, and separate potential from performance and personality from skill sets.

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